RR

VOLUME 61 ISSUE 1

JUNK DRAWER

KitKat
IS A HOTDOG A SANDWICH?
ESTABLISHED 1982
THE RUTGERS REVIEW
Lactaid
JAPANESE CHERRY BLOSSOM
MAHOGANY TEAKWOOD
Office DEPOT
CHOCOLATE
NJ TRANSIT
PROPERTY OF NJ TRANSIT

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Everyone has a junk drawer. It's a timeless thing. Mine lives in my kitchen just beneath the coffee maker. When I don't need my junk drawer, I forget about it entirely. It stays shut, collecting dust. But in the moments when inspiration strikes and my head is spinning with ideas– a desire to pick up an old hobby or a need for a specific material– my junk drawer is the first place I turn. It greets me in my best moments.

My junk drawer has measuring tape, extra shoelaces, a grip strengthener, and old phone cases that will never see the light of day again. As I've begun my senior year, I can't help but realize that my brain has become its own version of a junk drawer, full of thoughts I can't seem to throw away. *Where will I be in a year? Do I fill my days enough? Did I remember to do my laundry?*

My Notes app is another one: an archive of dreams I jot down before I forget, grocery lists, and half-finished reminders that made sense at one point. All of this is to say that I have come to appreciate my various junk drawers– literal, digital, or somewhere in-between– as quiet time capsules for all of the things I once cared about, never cared about, and may one day care about.

Just because something is in a junk drawer does not mean it's junk. After all, if we really didn't care for it, why would we keep it in a special spot, just in case we need it again?

In the making of this issue of RR, I've gotten to watch our staff empty out and expose their own junk drawers. Each page holds something once tucked away but now unearthed, something intimate and dear to the writer, designer, artist– forever immortalized in this ink. Maybe this magazine will end up in someone's junk drawer, folded, forgotten, waiting to be found again.

And that's just fine with me.

Warmly,
Sophie D'Errico

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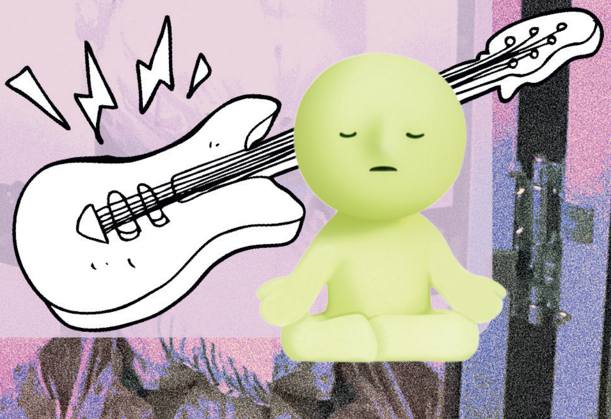

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DOES THE UNDRESSING OF *W*OMEN BENEFIT THE *MA*N?

An Analytical Look at the Woman of the Algerian War and Modern Feminisms Take on Fashion.

By Gianna Ramirez

Today, the war on terror looks like having to cover your laptop camera with tape. Disabling cookies and not updating your phone so that quantum computers can't use all your data to create the next best algorithm that captures your attention. When seeking power, accessibility to man is an incredibly useful tool. So in theory, protecting one's privacy is the strongest asset in opposing that power.

"Privacy is rarely lost in one fell swoop. It is usually eroded over time, little bits dissolving almost imperceptibly until we finally begin to notice how much is gone."

- Daniel J. Solove in Nothing to Hide: The False Tradeoff Between Privacy and Security, p.30 (Yale University Press, 2011).

In this essay we will be analyzing the impact of accessibility to the body. Specifically the body of the woman. To do this I'll be looking at some experiences Algerian Muslim women encountered during the Algerian War through Drif-Bitat Z. autobiography, Inside the Battle of Algiers : Memoir of a Woman Freedom Fighter. As well as looking at modern representations of feminism in TV and film, specifically the Netflix original Grand Army. The goal is to focus specifically on how the policing of their(women's) fashion or this dismantling of 'modesty' is a sign of progression or really a means to benefit an ancient establishment; The Patriarchy.

You look incredible! What's your secret?
Boundaries
@punk_history

The Algerian War - Woman's Perspective

Like much of history, the French had their feet deep in others soil. One for particular, Algeria. What's important to note is Algeria is a Muslim country. For the woman their lives consisted of veils, domestic work, and religious study. During this era of war their roles had to drastically adjust. Specifically for those like Drif-Bitat Z, who writes in her memoir detailed accounts of their revolution, the women had to become fighters. France's first weapon against women was an erosion of their veils. While most women regarded their veils (Haik) as a sign of modesty and submission to God, the French diagnosed it as a symbol of regression and ancient values that they did not align with.

So, in opposition, the French publicly stripped the women of their veils. This, a war crime with French morality, presented the idea that it serves modernity, but it was really a tool to shake the woman down. This is especially apparent because women would use their veils to hide weapons that aided them in fighting their revolution. So forcing them to 'undress' themselves was a means for power, to take the woman down from morality and also physical security. Through Batat's account, we can see that they did eventually use this to their advantage The Algerian woman would be on militia tasks undressing themselves to assimilate with the French people. This would work, and in their disguises, they could attack. Drif-Bitat recounts, "We put on makeup, Western dresses, and high heels. It was the perfect disguise. The French saw us not as threats, but as assimilated, obedient women" (Drif-Bitat, 89). And although it eventually led to their freedom, they first had to lower themselves to French standards, being stripped of their dignity to survive.

What we'll find in this essay is that women's clothing can serve as a means of protection but also a tool for taking power. The question lies in what we will go on to discuss further which addresses whether or not that radical un-dressing is supported because it benefits the woman, or because it benefits the man's gaze and his accessibility to the body, which equates to his accessibility to power.

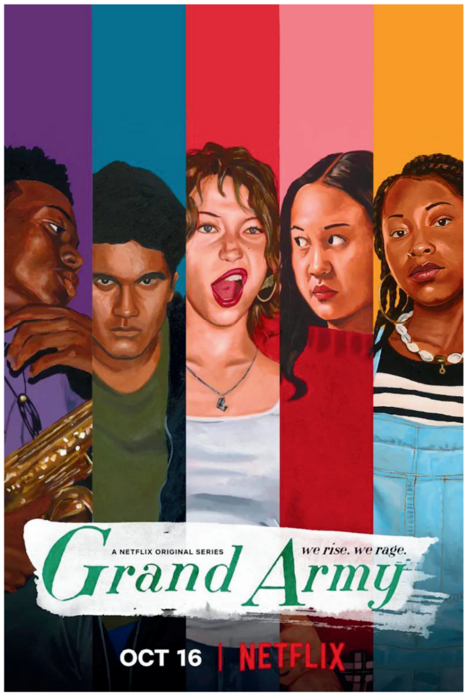
Modern Feminism in TV

Only over a century ago did we really begin to see the effects of the rallying of women in America fighting for their basic rights. Much like the Algerian woman their freedom of style was controlled by the institution. This led to what is called the Dress Reform Movement, for example it allowed women who had to work in labor to wear pants. Although this trend of jeans only really started in the late 60's and 80's of the 20th century. It was the start of a stronger campaign against the policing of women's clothes in the workplace, academia, and the general public. One that really comes to mind is the 'Free the Nipple' campaign that emerged in 2014. The general idea was to fight against the sexualization of female anatomy. But critics questioned whether or not this was genuine. The criticism was that this movement only works because once these women step outside and march topless, they receive more support because it puts them back into the male gaze. According to journalist Ione Gamble, "#FreeTheNipple's popularity could be argued as just another extension of how women are subconsciously taught to cater to the male gaze," even when the movement is fronted by women themselves (Gamble). Scholar Akane Kanai adds to this critique by stating that popular feminism often reinforces "the very gender norms it claims to resist, especially when empowerment is defined through visibility alone" (Kanai 41).

Algeria, May 17, 1958

“the very gender norms it claims to resist, especially when empowerment is defined through visibility alone” (Kanai 41).

To address some of the critics’ claims, I will be looking at the Netflix Original Grand Army, specifically episode two titled See Me. To quickly summarize, one of the main characters, Joey, feels belittled by her school dress code, believing it’s misogynistic. In retaliation, she stages a coup and sends out a school-wide message to everyone for them to ‘Free the Nipple’ at school. However, I want to look at specific moments in the episode and digest how her movement was actually being perceived. Specifically between timestamps 42:13 and 41:19. In this particular scene, the other male leads are talking with Joey about supporting her coup, and they’re excited at the idea of creating trouble for a cause. However, a minute later, they all continue down the hallway, and Joey gets called a ‘slut’ from an off-screen male character. Not a single one of the male leads went to her defense. Their solidarity was only present when the action was out of their pleasure or entertainment. In another episode, the boys go on to assault her, and their excuse was that she ‘wanted it anyway’ because of the way she chose to dress.



Circling back to my point, her undressing was, yes, a means to fight back against misogyny. The issue, however, lies in her supporters; her male counterparts were thrilled to support a movement that gave them more visual pleasure, but it was not true solidarity. As journalist Sophie Heawood notes, “a number of men who hadn’t had much track with all this feminist rubbish before suddenly proclaimed that they could see how great it was,” even requesting that more women join in (Heawood). This performance of support reveals a selective male support rooted not in belief, but in benefit. Just as the French men in the Algerian War only accepted the Algerian woman when they lowered themselves to the French standard, these men would only accept feminism in a form that looked favorable to them.

Concluding Thoughts

Much like the women of Algiers, the crux of women’s discrimination has been reflected in their clothing. Either they’re being stripped of their veils in an effort to modernize them, or celebrated for stripping voluntarily under the guise of liberation. In both cases, we see how undressing becomes less about the woman’s autonomy and more about how her body serves the social or political order, be it colonial control or illusionary progressivism. From Drif-Bitat’s tactical disguise to Joey’s protest in Grand Army, it becomes clear that fashion, whether modest or exposed, often operates as a battleground where patriarchy flexes its power. This illusionary empowerment is typically conditional, based on how pleasing it is to the male gaze or how palatable it seems to patriarchal norms. The dismantling of modesty, then, is not inherently a sign of progress unless it stems from true autonomy and is prescribed with structural change. Otherwise, it simply takes old systems of control in new, more, deceptive packaging.

these men would only accept feminism in a form that looked favorable to them.

Gianna Ramirez

Black Berets

by Cesar Urbina

The idea for this article came to me after an interaction with one of my professors. I went to class wearing a black newsboy cap, almost like a beret, and he asked "Is the Che look intentional?" It was a friendly, light-hearted comment—nothing to dwell on—but I hadn't thought about the political implications that the hat might carry. This sparked my curiosity about how certain, otherwise ordinary, articles of clothing become associated with political ideologies and more specifically, how the black beret came to embody the revolutionary spirit.

A sense of unity among participants is essential for successful revolutionary movements. Unity is achieved through a sharing of internal values, but not without the help of external appearances, however. Movements need an image, a brand, a visual representation that can be associated with their message. Fashion can often be a powerful catalyst for this kind of visual branding. If you look back to the revolutionary movements in recent history, most–if not all–had a common image, an aesthetic for their cause. Some articles of clothing have been consistently used throughout history to embody particular ideas; one of the most recognizable is the black beret.

Che

The black beret has long been a symbol of resistance, dating over a century back. Famously wearing it was one of the twentieth century's most controversial figures: Che Guevara— probably the most recognizable amongst those who wore it. The morals of Che's conduct and his "ends justifying the means" attitude are certainly questionable. This is by no means a romanticization of Che's hard-set attitude, but rather an examination of the relationship between the widely accepted "heroic revolutionary martyr" idea of Che and what exactly symbolizes his revolutionary image.

When thinking of iconic figures, we often visualize specific photos of them. In some cases, a single photo can become better known than the reality of the person behind it, intensifying this iconization process. This seems to be the case with Che. There are two very striking aspects of the notorious photo in the background: the commanding, unwaveringly resolute gaze off into the distance and the black beret sitting atop this determined head. Taken by Alberto Korda, "*Guerrillero Heroico*" or "Heroic Guerilla Fighter" is largely responsible for solidifying the association between Che and the black beret.

Both the image and the hat within it have been used as a symbol for resistance, whether screen-printed onto plain t-shirts, wheat-pasted on a concrete wall, or taped to a street pole. So what was up with the beret? The beret with the star was worn to signal his rank of *comandante* in the Cuban Revolution— a title given to him by Fidel Castro. Perhaps it is this which explains the close association between the black beret and the revolutionary spirit; the symbolic act of embodying the revolutionary spirit of a *comandante*.

The Black (Beret-Wearing) Panthers

The revolutionary black beret didn't die with Che in 1967. In fact, it experienced a rebirth the year before with the creation of the Black Panther Party. Founded in 1966, the Black Panthers set themselves on a mission to protect community members from an abusive police force, provide accessible healthcare, educate the youth, and assist community members with various social programs. With their Marxist-Leninist approach, the Black Panthers sent shockwaves throughout the country, gaining the priority of the FBI. Director J. Edgar Hoover described the Black Panther Party as "the greatest threat to the internal security of the country." This was the government's stance on the Black Panthers, a party formed to protect the internal security of their communities which were, to say the least, under constant police and government attack. Not only that, the Black Panthers' admiral display of successfully remedying some of the problems in their community— problems the government gave no solutions for— put the government's incompetency on national display.

Perhaps the black berets the Black Panthers wore gave the government glimpses of the black beret-wearing revolutionary they had just finished dealing with. Their uniform was practical and simple — in fact it wasn't really a uniform in the traditional sense. They often wore leather jackets, not to make a fashion statement, but because of their practicality. The founders of the BPP, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, shared the idea that

> **"Every young black man has a black leather jacket or can get one or can borrow one if they can't buy one."**

They also sported black turtlenecks, dark sunglasses, and dark shirts, but what is perhaps the most consistent article of clothing in this "uniform" was the black beret.

The black beret was a deliberate choice and symbolically resonated with their values. It was adopted as part of the uniform by founders Bobby Seale and Huey Newton when they saw French Resistance fighters wearing them in a film. They wanted to embody the revolutionary spirit of the beret. Pulled from Jeffery Crean and Thomas Zeiler's *The Fear of Chinese Power: An International History*, "Seale reported that Newton impressed him because he "knew the Red Book sideways, backwards, and forwards," and that they shared an admiration for the militant quartet of Mao, Franz Fanon, Malcolm X, and Che Guevara. It was in homage to the last of these four that the Panthers adopted their signature black berets..." In integrating it into their aesthetic, they strengthened the symbolic value of the beret and gave it a new context in which it could be appreciated.

To Conclude

Is this anything of significance? I think so. The nature of the relationship between the beret and what it symbolizes implies that clothing can serve as a powerful source of symbolism in political movements, whether to unite people or to amplify a message. This isn't anything new though– some of, if not most of us have probably noticed this already– but that doesn't make it any less important of an idea. In a time of intense polarity and volatility in the political sphere, it's so important to remember the power that people have as a united front and the methods they can use to maximize their effect, whether through fashion or otherwise. I'll continue wearing my black "beret," not particularly because of the people who wore it, but because of the idea it represents.

FOURTH WALL- PROFILING THE PERFORMATIVE MALE:

the theater of gender roles

Joan
Didion
The

MIA VACCARELLA

Gender has always been a performance. Every gesture, outfit, and word carries cues that align with or reject expectations. Women were often the ones cast in the leading role. The Greek courtesans of the classical period entertained men. The Renaissance muse existed to inspire male genius. The 1950s housewife greeted her husband with a smile at the end of his workday. The femme fatale uses her manipulative charm to achieve her own goals. The Hollywood starlet is perfecting her charm for the camera. We make caricatures of women to dissect their actions.

But recently, the performative male is the actor to examine. Generally, these are men who adopt the language, aesthetics, and gestures of feminism, not as a reflection of belief, but as a costume.

The key signals of a performative male might include canvas tote bags weighed down by a Joan Didion paperback, expensive matcha lattes, and artsy Insta photo dumps. These badges of "enlightenment" signal their false sense of progressivism and self-awareness. However, profiling the performative male is not about condemning men for engaging with femininity. Men should read (everyone should read). Tote bags are cute despite their inconvenience. Drinking matcha as a man is not a crime. And in many ways, the breaking of those gender boundaries may actually be a positive thing.

Even the language used to describe these men reveals the tension between biology and social identity. We call them "performative males," rather than "performative men," framing this term to disregard a socially constructed identity and emphasize a biological one. So by leaning into traits culturally coded as feminine, they're viewed as acting out of line with their "nature."

The phrase suggests that their performance is so unnatural that it is deceptive because society still clings to biological essentialism even in the wake of gender fluidity.

However, an issue does arise when feminism becomes another mirror in which men admire themselves. This theater of gender roles persists. The use of feminism, in this way, becomes a joke–men can wear feminism without shouldering the discomfort or accountability it should demand.

But, in the fact that gender has always been a performance, can the performative male even really exist?

The confusion between performance and authenticity has blurred our understanding of what feminist allyship actually looks like. A man who reads a feminist essay or attends a protest doesn't automatically become a feminist. They may be performative in the same way that performative activism exists. When a man listens, advocates, and challenges systems that oppress women, his behavior moves beyond performance into practice. But when he adopts feminist aesthetics—talking points or imagery—without internal change, he is "performing".

While it is true that within this sentiment, there are women rejecting men's adoption of femininity, there are also women who find themselves wary of men concealing a misogynistic identity.

Part of what is so frightening is that the aesthetics of a “performative male” can actually work.

It’s much less frightening, after all, to be the object of a woman’s desire than a man’s. Performing femininity allows men to exist in a softer space for women to feel seen by a feminine figure without men threatening their own sense of safety or power. They can borrow gentleness, sensitivity, and feminist ideals without having to risk being truly vulnerable. In doing so, they occupy a liminal space of being soft enough to seem progressive, but distant enough not to actually be progressive.

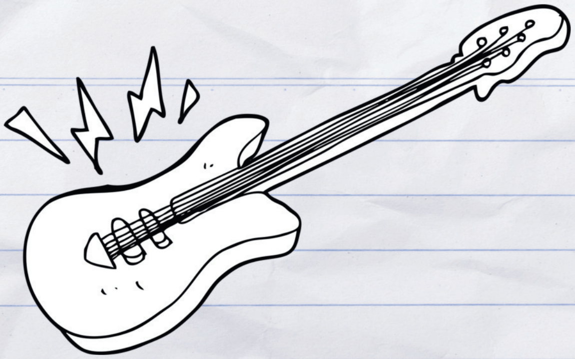
So while some online have taken this term to an intense extreme, leading us back into a counterintuitive cycle of policing gender roles, the act of reading Joan Didion or drinking matcha does not make a man performative; these have just become signals to women of potential deception. I do think, for example, that such extreme distaste for men reading in public ends up missing the mark drastically.

An important question I’ve been trying to answer is that if these men are performing feminism, who is their audience? It seems obvious: they’re performing for women, hoping to be seen as safe, desirable, or emotionally mature. Yet, their performance can sometimes cater to other men. There’s a kind of prestige in being the man who “gets it,” the one who can navigate both worlds—the masculine and the feminine—without losing dominance. This duality of appearing evolved while remaining in control. The performance, then, becomes another act of masculine power.

In the case of the truly performative male, women may become the audience, but their ability to be the arbiter remains out of reach. Still, the performative male reveals much more to us about the inability to escape our gendered scripts than what it means to be truly authentic.

NATIONAL BESTSELLER
JOAN DIDION
NATIONAL BOOK AWARD–WINNING AUTHOR OF THE YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING
BLUE NIGHTS
“Incantatory. . . . A beautiful condolence note to humanity about some of the painful realities of the human condition.” —The Washington Post

why you should suck at your hobbies



By Sophie D'Errico

I'm here to tell you that you should suck at your hobbies. Or, at the very least, don't stop pursuing them just because you suck.

Take it from me– quite possibly the most mid guitar player, painter, and runner you'll meet. I can barely play barre chords (the action on my guitar is too high, obviously), I can't paint from my imagination, and I have to continuously convince myself to keep running.

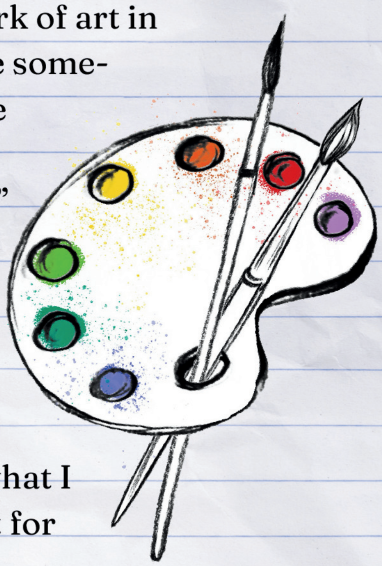
And yet, I don't care. I really don't. Of course, I strive to be better at my hobbies. But honestly, I'm just happy I'm doing them at all.

Here's the deal: according to a study from the School of Nursing in Sydney, Australia, having a hobby can boost personal growth, reduce stress, and even improve social connections (if your hobby involves other people). Hobbies release feel-good hormones like endorphins, dopamine, and serotonin which lower levels of depression, anxiety, and stress.

Evidently, hobbies are very good for us. Let's talk about why it's okay to be bad at them.

First, you may argue that sucking at something makes you feel frustrated, which makes you feel worse, not better. To that I say: take the pressure off yourself! I know, easier said than done. But think of it this way. Let's say you suck at guitar. Who cares? No one's asking you to headline Coachella. At least you can play a few tunes well. Focus on the positives and work toward progress, without the pressure and negative attitude. Growth works best when you let go of perfectionism.

Once you've taken the pressure off, step two is to ignore the stigmas related to your hobby. Personally, I enjoy painting and drawing, but I have a difficult time doing so without a reference. Needing a photo or another work of art in order to create something made me feel as though Iwasn't a "real" artist. I felt halted by the pressure that everything I make must be original. But what I realized is that for



someone like me, who simply wants to fill some time putting paintbrush to canvas, it is completely valid to copy art that already exists if it makes me happy. I'll scroll Pinterest, find something that intrigues me, and recreate it with my own little twist. This is perfectly okay! Recreating art is better than not making art at all.

Another reason people avoid hobbies is because they don't have the luxury of time to dedicate themselves to becoming good at it. This is precisely why it shouldn't matter if you are good. With the little time you have, try to enjoy it without feeling the pressure to master it. If you can give it 20 minutes a day or a few hours on the weekend, that's enough.

Having multiple hobbies is also a great way to break up the monotony of your week. Sure, there's the phrase "a jack of all trades is a master of none," but the full quote actually ends with "but oftentimes better than a master of one." There is nothing wrong with being that jack of all trades. Knit sweaters with holes in them and make watercolor art that looks like it's still drying.

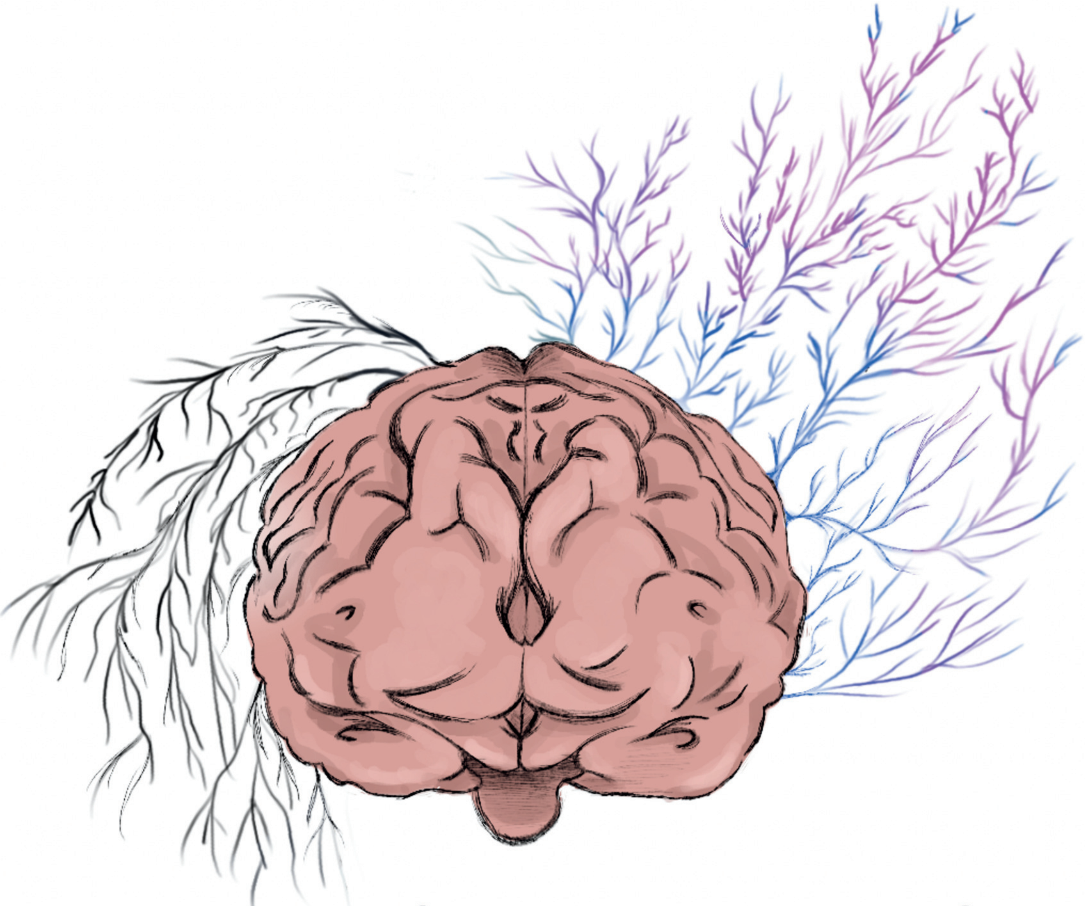
Many people panic when asked what their hobbies are. They think, "Well, I like to lie in bed and watch videos on my phone." And listen, I get it– life is hard and sometimes lying in bed on your phone feels like the only way to decompress. Hobbies can sometimes feel like a whole other responsibility in and of themselves, but know that your hobby is supposed to be your de-stressor, as well as what reminds you that you are a person outside of work or school.

Hobbies are a good investment for yourself long-term, too. In a study of retired adults, those who had a hobby reported higher happiness, better health, and more life satisfaction. Those who showed signs of depression were less likely to have a hobby. Ultimately, engaging in hobbies can be a powerful way to support your future self.

Now, if you're really lost and haven't discovered your "thing" yet, here's how you can find a hobby. First, think of things you enjoy, or maybe things you used to enjoy when you were younger. Maybe you like watching movies, Star Wars, playing tennis, or scrapbooking. Consider if the hobby is realistic for you (if it's January in New Jersey, maybe skip surfing for now). Once you find something you may like, get rid of the perfectionist attitude and just *start*.

Avoiding hobbies is neglecting the best version of yourself. Give your life meaning, and get a damn hobby! And if you suck at it? All is well.

DOOMSCROLLING



is modern social ***control***

(And what to do)

by Saliha Ahmed

We've all heard the terms **dopamine addiction** and **dopamine detox** being thrown around in conversations around phone usage, social media and doomscrolling. To some degree we all understand the psychology of dopamine: the little neurons that light up and make us feel good—happier with each click and each scroll and each like, until one swipe turns into a million and three minutes into three seconds of attention.

But is this an individual issue or a broader social problem?

When relaxation becomes scrolling, and creating becomes consuming, free time is spent away with clicks, scrolls and advertisements, leaving no time for original thought. More sinisterly, systems that heighten dopamine addictions based on psychologically quicker systems of gratification are ***enthusiastically*** developed and released. Think of the rise of short form videos, like Youtube's introduction of Shorts following the success of TikTok.

The dopamine addiction is not just a byproduct of the internet, it is enhanced by companies behind these apps to maximize their own revenue. Money is being made from our attention and time. So who stands to benefit from this?

When people spend more time scrolling through frivolity, they are distracted by the darker events happening in the world. Political and environmental chaos is overshadowed by the algorithm's push of the latest trend or pop culture controversy. Entertainment provides a cover for more insidious activities, pushed to the public by addicting algorithms. Neurologically, people are dulled until resistant thought and the critical thinking ability to question those in power is diminished.

With all of these dopamine machinations, could we consider the future concept of dopamine enslavement?

In fact, there is already a growing divide between those caught in the dopamine trap and those not. Often, this is simply working along previous divides. Lower classes, already systematically oppressed and without much access to leisure, are more susceptible to the easily accessible dopamine flood. Social media is 'free' because it benefits a pre-existing suppressive social structure.

The already-rich, with healthier leisure activities and phone bans in private schools, are intentionally avoiding dopamine addiction. More importantly, this is the very class those who manufacture these dopamine addicting technologies are in. It's clear that dopamine addiction is setting up potential for further exploitation of oppressed classes by those already on top, who control the dopamine machine.

Dopamine addictions are not individual, but manufactured through the technology created to ensnare our time and energy in scrolling. Addressing this is not just important for our individual health and thought, but also for our collective social wellbeing.

Here's a few ways to break the dopamine hold:

1. Reduce scrolling:
Cut down on this slowly, and provide yourself a short daily time limit. While it's tempting to just scroll through videos on the bus, or when bored, do something else in that short time. Read a poem, write a bad description of your surroundings, play a word game.

2. Consume mindfully:
Fulfill the already constructed need to consume with articles, long video essays and short movies if you need stimulation. If you need calm consumption, watch something slow, a slice of life of someone showing their art, their garden, their passion—and be inspired!

3. Talk to others:
You'd be surprised at how many people are frustrated with how much of their time technology and social media takes up. Everyone is dealing with this in our day and age, and talking about the social implications of this seemingly individual problem will help create connection and support.

A Comprehensive Guide to the Restaurants of New Brunswick (& surrounding areas)

by Aidan Icasiano and Amber Safeer

If you're a seasoned Rutgers student like we are, then you know the pain of being constantly recommended the same repetitive food choices for dates – Ramen Nagomi. El Jefe's. Stuff Your Face. These places aren't necessarily bad, they're just getting a bit old. But worry not, dear reader, as we have composed a definitive list of some of the best (and worst) places to eat near the Rutgers Campus.

KURA REVOLVING SUSHI

onto the belt.

Kura Revolving Sushi adds an interesting twist to the dining experience via the conveyor belt, which transports plates of sushi in a loop around the restaurant and right to your table. You have the choice of watching the loop until you spot an item you want to take off, or you can order a specific dish to be delivered on a small train or those new-fangled robot waiters. After finishing a plate, you can deposit it into a slot, which tallies your orders at a rate of $3.75 per plate. Even if you win a gachapon prize after 15 plates (which is already $60 for a toy, mind you), Kura simply is not an economical choice. If you hate the nightmare-level parking at the HMart lot and don't want to blow your monthly budget on one date, Kura Revolving Sushi is a restaurant you su-should **NOT** consider.

ROOSTERSPIN

Basking in the ambiance of reclaimed industrial decor, Roosterspin elevates familiar Korean dishes with quiet luxury. Complete with an extensive vinyl collection, karaoke rooms, and a moody bar, Roosterspin is a standout spot in New Brunswick. Though their dishes are pricier, ranging from $20-30 per person, the effort put into each is evident just from its carefully curated presentation alone. Impressing your date with a good meal and hitting every note in your favorite karaoke song makes this spot **HOT**.

GAELOS

Gaelos is a quaint Mexican restaurant we came across during our junior year and has quickly become a favorite spot for us and our friends. Down Somerset St and past RWJ, Gaelos may not be a large restaurant nor have a spacious parking lot, but it compensates for these with its soul-fixing, heartwarming cooking. In my experience, ordering a large glass of either horchata or agua de jamaica with the 20 tacos is sure to be **HOT**.

HAWAII STATION

Hawaii Station has been a go-to for us for a while now, and with good reason. Its menu features Hawaiian classics like poke bowls, barbecue, chicken katsu, and more, all for a relatively fair price ranging from $10-$20 per person. The atmosphere is casual, they offer punch cards (10 meals purchased = 1 free meal), and the food is always fresh and of great quality. For a no-frills date, keep Hawaii Station in mind because it's certainly **HOT**.

WU'S SHANGHAI DUMPLING

While I believe soup dumplings are the perfect choice for a date during these colder months, I cannot recommend Wu's Shanghai (both Edison and North Brunswick locations) due to its lackluster hospitality and subpar quality. Between its informal sit-down setup and chewy dumplings, I'm often left wanting more from this establishment. Instead, if you're set on soup dumplings, go the extra mile and visit Tasty Moment, whose food seems fresher, more flavorful, and provides a more enjoyable experience. It is everything that Wu's Shanghai is **NOT**.

* * *

WOOD STACK
PIZZA + KITCHEN

WOODSTACK PIZZA + KITCHEN

With the recent influx of fancy restaurants in Metuchen, Wood Stack has become a popular location for an elevated pizza experience. With the cozy ambiance of low lights and a wood-fired oven, Wood Stack prides itself on its fresh ingredients, as they should. I was certainly surprised when I read on the menu that, after the first basket of complimentary bread, their delicious artisanal loaves were available for purchase in the restaurant or to take home. Though pizza and bread are the focal points of this restaurant, I wholeheartedly recommend the pasta bolognese, which has the perfect sauce to win over any date. If you go here, we guarantee it will be, above all else, **HOT**.

DEEDEE'S PIZZA

If you've ever driven through Highland Park before, this place has definitely caught your eye. The outside is decorated entirely in murals of retro video game vibes and pizza. Even the name is reminiscent of a video game character (King Dedede). Despite the beautiful outside, the interior is underwhelming; it just seems to be like any other pizza place: no retro references inside, no cool wall art, not even one arcade machine. The pizza is fair; I particularly am a fan of their sauce, but the pizza is often smothered in too much oil. If you like getting grease stains on your shirt on a first date, then it's great, otherwise... **NOT**.

LEO'S BARBECUE

Leo's Barbecue is a literal hidden gem – located in a secluded courtyard in the Hadley Center, this Filipino eatery has it all: low costs, generous portions, and great tasting Filipino classics. The inside of the restaurant is small, with just a few tables offered for seating. The food is served cafeteria-style, with dishes prepared in advance that are laid out behind plexiglass. For those that are unfamiliar with Filipino dishes, being able to see the exact food you'll be eating makes ordering that much easier. Leo's is more so a place to pick up dinner, eat in the courtyard, or bring home to have a cozy night in, rather than have a date at the restaurant. Still, the food is incredibly delicious and so **HOT**.

We've done the work to deliver you the best advice we can – now it's your turn. Go get that date and impress them with your (our) excellent food taste!

Madonna in a Fur Coat:

A Love Story?

Sanda Rakotobe-Joel

Madonna in a Fur Coat is a Turkish classic written by Sabahattin Ali and was published in 1943. It was only recently translated into English by Maureen Freely and Alexander Dawe in 2016. This novel tells the story of Raif Efendi, a German translator whom the narrator initially describes as a shell of a man with nothing to live for. Through the exploration of Raif's journal entry, one learns about his time in Berlin and his encounter with Maria Puder, a painter. Their relationship begins when Raif visits a museum and stumbles upon a self-portrait of Maria. As their relationship blossoms and eventually ends, the reader receives a glimpse into the window of Raif's inner thoughts and realizations about himself. The underlying love story combined with the political tensions of the novel's time, Ali's exploration of gender role abnormalities, and the discussion regarding the formation of bonds with those around us contribute to the captivating novel that is *Madonna in a Fur Coat.*

When *Madonna in a Fur Coat* was first published in Turkish in 1943, it was ill-received and criticized by many of Ali's colleagues and friends who claimed that the novel was merely just another love story. However, contrary to critics' opinions, Ali's novel is not just another love story. The political issues that arose during Ali's time could have inspired his decision to set a majority of the novel in Germany. Ali was known as a writer who often incorporated his political views into his work. In many of his previous works, such as his novel *Içimizdeki Seytan (The Devil Within Us)*, Ali mixes literature and art with the reality of politics. Many of his previous works also take place in Turkey. Ali was harshly criticized for the political views that he included in his writing. Because of such strong reactions to his work, Ali was asked by the owner of Hakikat newspaper, Cemal Hakki Bey, to write a love story which was completely unrelated to politics. Thus, *Madonna in a Fur Coat* was born. Certain dialogues in the novel about politics in Germany could suggest Ali's choice to set the novel in Germany might have been due to his attempt to adhere to the constriction of eliminating any mention of politics in his writing, while hiding his critiques of Turkish society within a story set in a different location.

> "...the story of Madonna in a Fur Coat strips down what it means to build a connection with someone."

Ali's portrayal of Raif Efendi and Maria Puder creates a commentary on gender roles and adds another layer on top of the love story in *Madonna in a Fur Coat*. Raif is written as a slightly feminine character. In spite of him being a man, some of his responsibilities are those that one would traditionally expect a woman to perform–especially in the time period of the novel–such as buying groceries. His personality also has a shyness and sensitivity about him which contrasts with the typical masculinity expected in patriarchal Turkey. Maria even tells Raif that he reminds her of a "young girl." Maria is your typical fiercely independent female character. She has a bold personality and a deep distrust of men.

Many reviews on Goodreads praise the yearning and unrequited love in *Madonna in a Fur Coat*. Several BookTok videos call the novel the pinnacle of male yearning. However, the political background of the book and Ali's commentary on gender roles clearly prove that there is more that lies beneath the surface. While I would recommend this book and found it an enjoyable read, I would not recommend it to a reader on the search for a simple love story about yearning. In addition to its commentary on gender roles and politics, the story of *Madonna in a Fur Coat* strips down what it means to build a connection with someone. Through Raif's inner thoughts and his interactions with Maria, the reader is taken on a journey exploring the process of overcoming initial misconceptions about a new acquaintance and finding the good in others regardless of their flaws. Access to Raif's inner thoughts reveal a sense of loneliness which leads to a discussion about how one can get in the way of their own happiness. His character's decision to spend years brooding over Maria rather than investing in his own life causes the reader to ponder about a life wasted in one's despair. With all of these details taken into consideration, *Madonna in a Fur Coat* provides several subjects for the reader to contemplate and it would be a shame to boil it down to a mere love story.

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

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PHOTO BY NICK SINGIDAS

WHAT STREAMING TOOK FROM YOU

peacock
ubo

PARTIALLY CROWDSOURCED LIST OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST STREAMING CULTURE

KATERINA BASUEL

1) THE POP CULTURE TIMELINE

"Mostly, I miss the weekly catch-up lunches," was the sentiment shared by my mother on the couch, sitting in front of Jeopardy. It's the only show that we still watch regularly, at 7 p.m. every week, on the dot. We were discussing the ways that streaming services changed pop culture, with Ken Jennings fading into the background as they speed through the "Streaming TV" category. *What is The Office, Strange New Worlds, Rosamund Pike, The Studio, and Looking for Alaska?* Cue the polite applause and awkward contestant anecdotes.

What she meant by that comment is something I've thought about for a while: that while streaming services allow people to retroactively binge shows, they also disrupt the pop culture timeline. Before the streaming age, film and television functioned on a linear timeframe in the cultural zeitgeist. In the case of TV, this meant that when new episodes of popular shows aired, everyone tuned in at the same time, then discussed it the following week. Everyone was on the same page, connected by the release schedule. Streaming, however, changes the timeline from a collective linear experience into a confusing, solitary catch-up game. It is deeply isolating. I feel that whenever I want to discuss a show with someone, they hit me with "I'll get around to it". Or I'll be on season 7, they're on season 2, and then I have to Google if Character B has died yet. (*Sorry! I didn't mean to spoil that!)*

Although most people know that streaming promotes binge-watching, the streaming format also somehow promotes procrastination. If there's all the time in the world, then why bother watching now? Who has the time to watch hours of TV when everyone's so busy? I'm a victim of this too, having been stuck on episode six of *The Pitt* for the past month. My friend wants to talk about the final episodes, but I can only say "I'll get around to it."It's frustrating for all parties involved!

The movie-watching experience also suffers from the collective declining attention span, as movies get maybe two weeks in theaters before being herded onto their respective platforms. Why bother seeing movies in person when you can just watch them months later on your buggy laptop? The pop culture experience, once a collective moment, is now fragmented into whenever individuals "get around to it". But pop culture requires popular discussion and community. In other words, you need those weekly catch-up lunches about the newest episode of ER.

2) CURIOSITY BEYOND THE ALGORITHM

This is a point that my coworker brought up when discussing this article in between rushes. Growing up with her grandparents, she fondly recalled Friday evening trips to Blockbuster, perusing the aisles in search of the three movies for the week. It was a mixed bag, she said, whether the movies would be the most life-changing films she'd ever seen or the most mind-numbing trash. Nevertheless, she attributes that freedom to browse for her love of movies now, as it taught her to be open to whatever piqued her curiosity.

Her childhood attitude, of course, preceded the omniscient algorithm that directs her to the most placifying show, shuffling and reshuffling the same thirty movies under different witty taglines that will make streaming services the most money.

Nowadays, Netflix/HBO/Disney+/Hulu/Amazon (you get the gist) gently guides us in the direction of what it wants us to see, and we follow happily. The discussion reminded me of being a child, browsing the public library for hours and picking books at random, unencumbered by the top ten BookTok recommendations of the week. I dream of the days before, "Your Next Favorite Romantasy Novel: A Palace of Knives and Flower Petals and Hot Men With Bat Wings!"

In this way, algorithms and streaming services are more often than not anti-curiousity. They are structured to keep you watching longer, so they only show you what is proven to do that, slowly shrinking the scope of what you're offered. Over time, viewers fall victim to echo chambers of content, bouncing around watching movies and shows with the same five tropes, afraid to step outside their comfort zones. Without exposure to a wider variety of ideas and art forms, and without the curiosity to seek it out, people lose out on what the internet age claimed to provide: democratized access to the world of knowledge.

3) OWNERSHIP OF WHAT YOU BUY

In this section, I will sound like an old man yelling at a cloud. But I stand by my point: nobody owns anything they buy anymore! In the past decade, the market has drifted more and more into a pay-for-rent model, from video games that you're buying the license to play to monthly subscriptions for removing ads from your Smart Fridge. As subscriptions stack on subscriptions, that yearly Netflix subscription starts to look like bills rather than fun extras. That's not even considering the crackdowns on location-based password sharing, a plight that disproportionately affects broke college students. We live in a membership economy, not an ownership economy.

Unfortunately, it's mostly a good deal. Subscribers get nearly unlimited access to the world at their fingertips, on demand, whenever they want. The difference between membership and ownership seems trivial. But what happens when original content is yanked from streaming services simply because the higher-ups don't want it there anymore? It's, sadly, a common story these days. Entire shows and movies get practically erased from the internet, unavailable except perhaps for places best accessed with a VPN and a strong virus-blocker.

Personally, I'm an advocate of buying physical media. First, the quality is better, as streaming services are limited by compression and weak home wifi. But secondly, and more importantly, buying it means that you own it. In an age when media can be censored from the public for the crime of showing the LGBTQ+ community or cracking jokes at political figures, preservation of that art is all the more important. Physical media is not always accessible or cheap (and I realize that this is when I get especially cloud-yell-y), but it stands that the streaming model makes censorship easier than ever.

4) A PROPER CONCLUSION TO THIS ARTICLE

Now is when the author sighs and drops their cloud-yelling fist. Perhaps this article is motivated by sentimentality for days gone by, or sounds like a college radio snob hoarding CDs, or maybe it's just that the asbestos in the walls of Murray Hall has finally gotten to me. I'm quite sure that it's the asbestos.

But behind that is the honest worry about the way that the streaming service monopoly controls the public's access to art. Worse, perhaps, is also the way it slowly erodes our patience, relationships, and the very desire to seek art out. TV and movie culture will likely never truly return to the pre-streaming world, but we will learn and we will adapt.

Streaming culture places a lot of control out of the public's hands, but that doesn't mean we are powerless. In lieu of weekly catch-up lunches, I see "watch parties" where friends make a potluck out of season drops. Rather than browsing Blockbuster, people recommend movies with their "Top Four" on Letterboxd. And when the media seems as unsubstantial as my spam inbox, The Criterion Closet provides a very substantial collection that you can buy and own. Despite everything, art is out there. Community is out there. It might be hard to find, but it's ripe for the picking for those with the desire to seek it.

BY NOELLE O’NEILL

WHAT MAKES AN ADAPTATION?

GATSBY'S PARTIES ARE MODERN! THEY'RE LIVELY, THEY'RE CURRENT —BUT OF COURSE, WHAT'S "NEW" IN THE 20S IS NOT THE SAME AS WHAT'S "NEW" NOW.

Part of what makes art so interesting is that it is, to some extent, always representative of the time period it was created in. After all, the "classics" as we know them today didn't start off as period pieces. They were once modern! These old works are so representative of their time because they often reflect the author's own reality; they could replicate the time so well because it's the only thing the writer knew. Similarly, the cultural implications of these texts are also very much stuck in the era they were made. While this can make them serve as time capsules to the values of the time, it can make the actual message of the text get muddied over the years. Eventually, the exact message the author tried to get across will get lost in the waves of time, with audiences only being able to speculate what they could have meant initially.

That's where adaptations come in. When the original message intended by the creator isn't clear to contemporary audiences, artists can reformat the stories in a more modern way to properly express those original tones and messages.

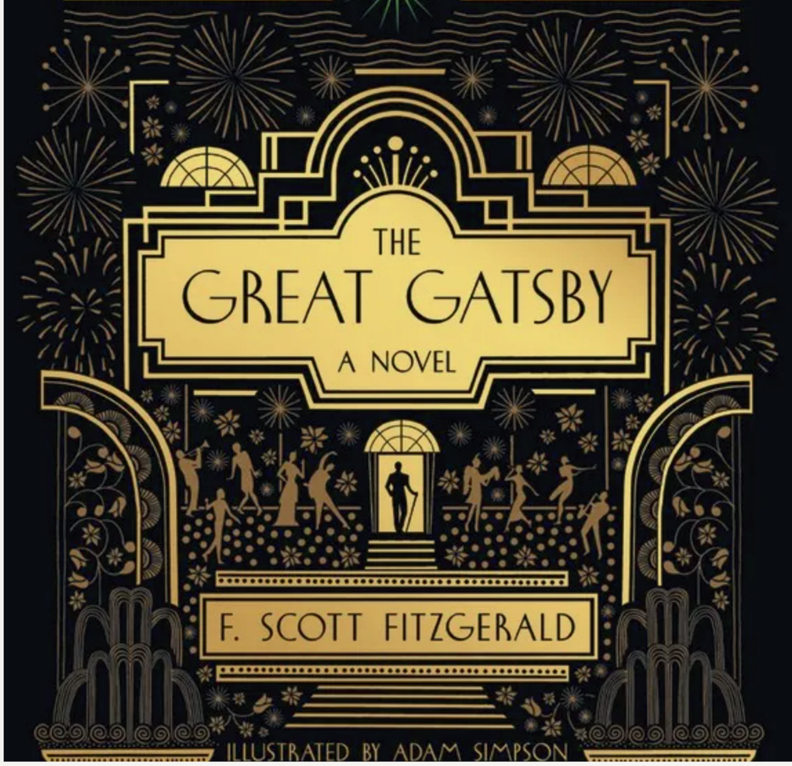
But how *does* one adapt these ideas properly? There isn't one surefire way of doing it, and many writers and directors have taken vastly different approaches to it.

One that seems to stand out among other adaptations is the 2013 adaptation of The Great Gatsby. There are many liberties the movie takes, many of which are divisive amongst critics and fans of the novel. This is to be expected by the director, Luhrmann, as he is also responsible for the 1996 adaptation *Romeo + Juliet,* a movie well known for its unique take on the original play. The most striking decision made for the *The Great Gatsby* movie is the musical direction. Aside from some changes in character writing, most of the movie is largely true to the book and time period; the characters talk, act, and dress how you would expect, and much of their environment reflects a dramatized version of the 1920s. The music, however, is distinctly modern. At all of Gatsby's grand parties, they play more modern genres like pop and rap rather than what you might expect out of a grandiose party of the era.

Although a little jarring, it truly is a creative way of getting the feel of the world Fitzgerald created. Gatsby's parties are modern! They're lively, they're current—but of course, what's "new" in the '20s is not the same as what's "new" now. Regardless, Gatsby's parties are analogous for what his character represents: new money, new wealth. By juxtaposing the '20s style with the modern music, you get a feel for both of these things. Gatsby and his parties feel slightly out of place in a world so set on old money and inheritances and the like. It all combines to not only make you see where Gatsby fits into the picture of the time (or rather, see how he stands out), but it also makes you hear and feel it on a subconscious level.

Sometimes, directors miss the mark with a message, though, missing the idea of the original character or story and turning it into something less interesting. Unfortunately, the character adaptation of Irene Adler in the BBC's modern retelling of the classic Sherlock stories is an example of this. For those unfamiliar, she is effectively one of the only characters to ever "beat" Holmes throughout the original set of stories. It's important to keep in mind when these stories were released while recognizing how significant that is. The nineteenth century isn't exactly known for its feminism, yet one of the most popular stories from the time featured a strong female character. Now, this isn't to say that characters like this were common in these stories, as Adler is the only female character you can find that wasn't either a damsel in distress or killed. That being said, she is still a woman respected by the other characters, all of whom are men, for her intelligence in the original short story.

But how do you adapt properly? Adler isn't just an intelligent character, she exists to defy the roles women played at the time. Her simply being intelligent and cunning may have been progressive for the time, but that isn't so much the case now. She isn't just intelligent, she's rebellious! They had to do something drastic to show this change in meaning, and in a sense they did– sort of. The BBC's version of Adler comes off very strong, still defying society's expectations of women. Rather than just be defiant with her intelligence, she is also defiant in a more modern way, boldly and unashamedly expressing her sexuality, both in terms of being queer and her actual sexual preferences. If they stopped there, this could have been a great way to handle her character! She is still drastically going against the status-quo while maintaining her status as a strong female character. However, they changed her story in requiring the male protagonist's help to save her life. While it is a remarkably small plotpoint in the grand scheme of her character, it was still a disappointing way to end her story. It's a decision that seems to go against the ideas of her original character; she never needed anyone's help to achieve her goals! If anything, her defiance was a nuisance for the protagonist, whom she outsmarted. The decision to change her character in this way comes out of a clear misunderstanding of how she was originally written, entirely disregarding her independence.



It's always interesting to see what route writers decide to take when adapting media, especially considering how many different ways there are to do it. While these stories may be timeless, they can still lose the original meaning over time, so it's fascinating when they are reworked to be more palatable for modern audiences. Their meanings can be adapted in ways that either enhance and degrade the original piece, and even the smallest changes can completely change the ideas once presented.

Karren Miller-Sweeper

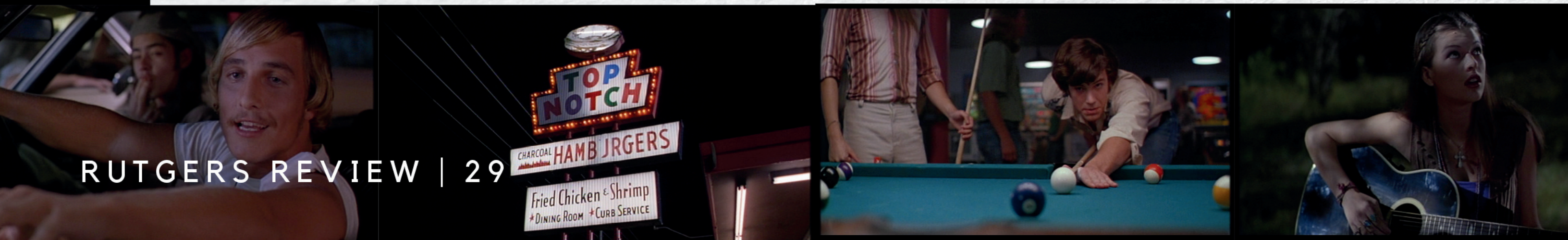
Movies Where Nothing Happens, But SOMETHING Happens

A junk drawer is essential in every space. Whether it's your house or your college dorm, the items in that drawer have a meaning, even if you can't give a reason why. Movies are like that sometimes, too. Sometimes, you watch a movie and wonder why you watched it, because nothing really happens in it. But once you sit with what you watched, you can find its deeper meaning. It may not necessarily be flashy or high budget, but character studies and learning more about yourself through these films can be more impactful than flashy movies with big budgets. Here is a list of six movies where nothing happens, but *something* happens.

Dazed and Confused

Dazed and Confused follows a group of high school students on the last day of school in Texas in 1976. The film lacks a central plot, instead following different characters throughout the day. The film is usually reduced to being a "stoner film" because of its lack of plot or conflict, but the point is much deeper than that. Some of the students in the film are just entering high school, while others are graduating from high school. The film explores the complexities of adolescence and the challenges of growing up. Even though we must move on, nostalgia will live forever. The film, released in the 90s but set in the 70s, illustrates how we remember periods of our lives forever due to the significant changes that occurred during these periods.

(dir. Richard Linklater, 1993)

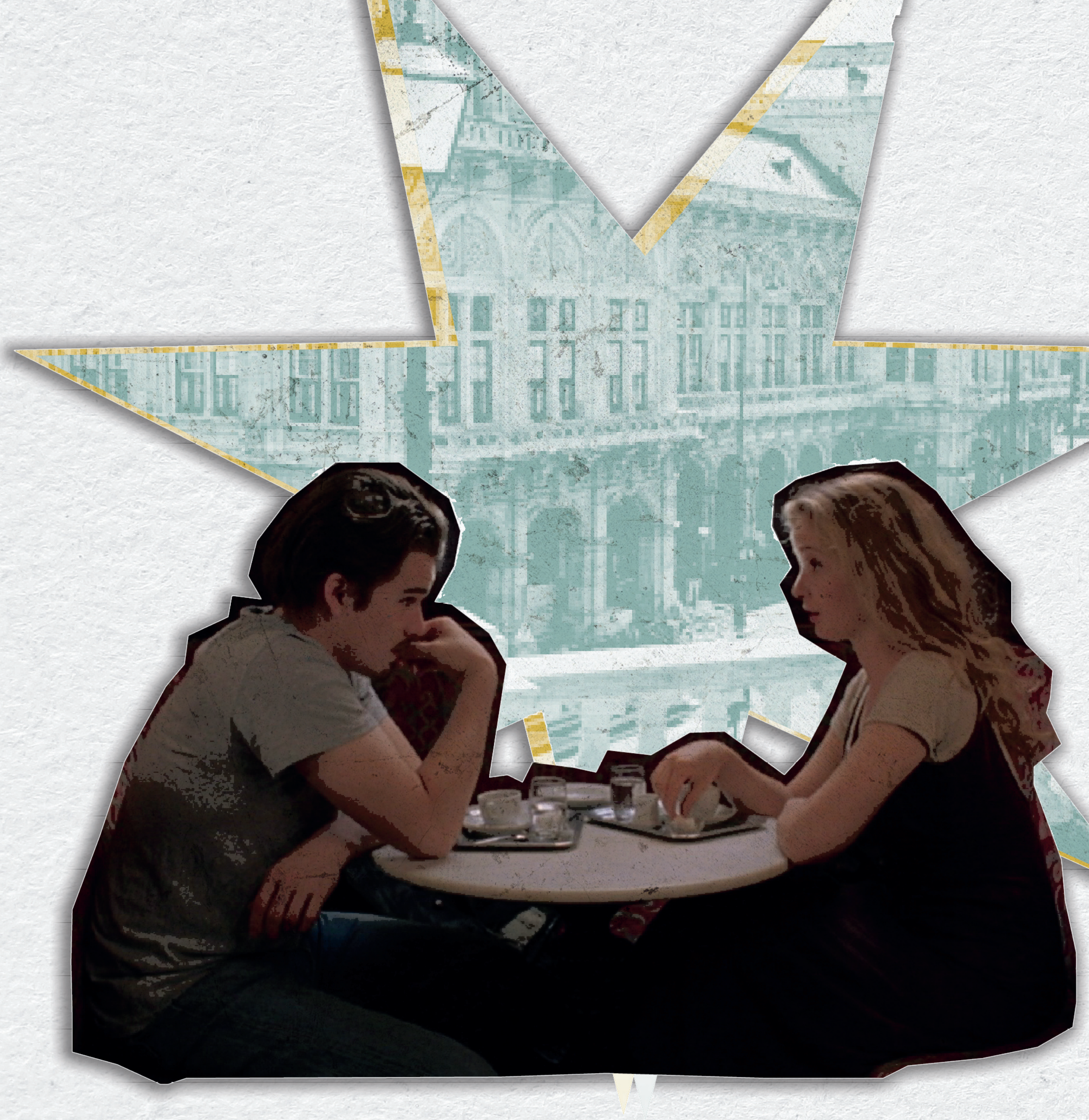


In the Mood for Love

In the Mood for Love follows Su Li-zhen and Chow Mo-wan after they find out that their spouses are having an affair, and they end up developing feelings for each other. Throughout the film, the two characters never kiss each other, but create a different level of intimacy through the music choices and colors presented by the director and editors. Despite lacking these traditional indications of affection– or the characters even approaching them–, the film explores love and desire in ways that many other modern romance movies fail to do. The themes of star-crossed lovers, missed opportunities, and time are displayed beautifully throughout the film.

(dir. Wong Kar-wai, 2000)

The "Before" Trilogy



The Before Trilogy includes movies "Before Sunrise," "Before Sunset," and "Before Midnight." The films follow Celine and Jesse at three separate times in their lives, all nine years apart. The films are all very casual, focusing on regular conversations people have when they like each other, when they're in love with each other, and when they despise each other. Although some may find these films boring, each explores the stages of love uniquely and interestingly. The films explore the impact of aging on love and relationships, and how our perceptions of relationships evolve across generations.

(dir. Richard Linklater, 1995, 2004, 2013)

The Florida Project

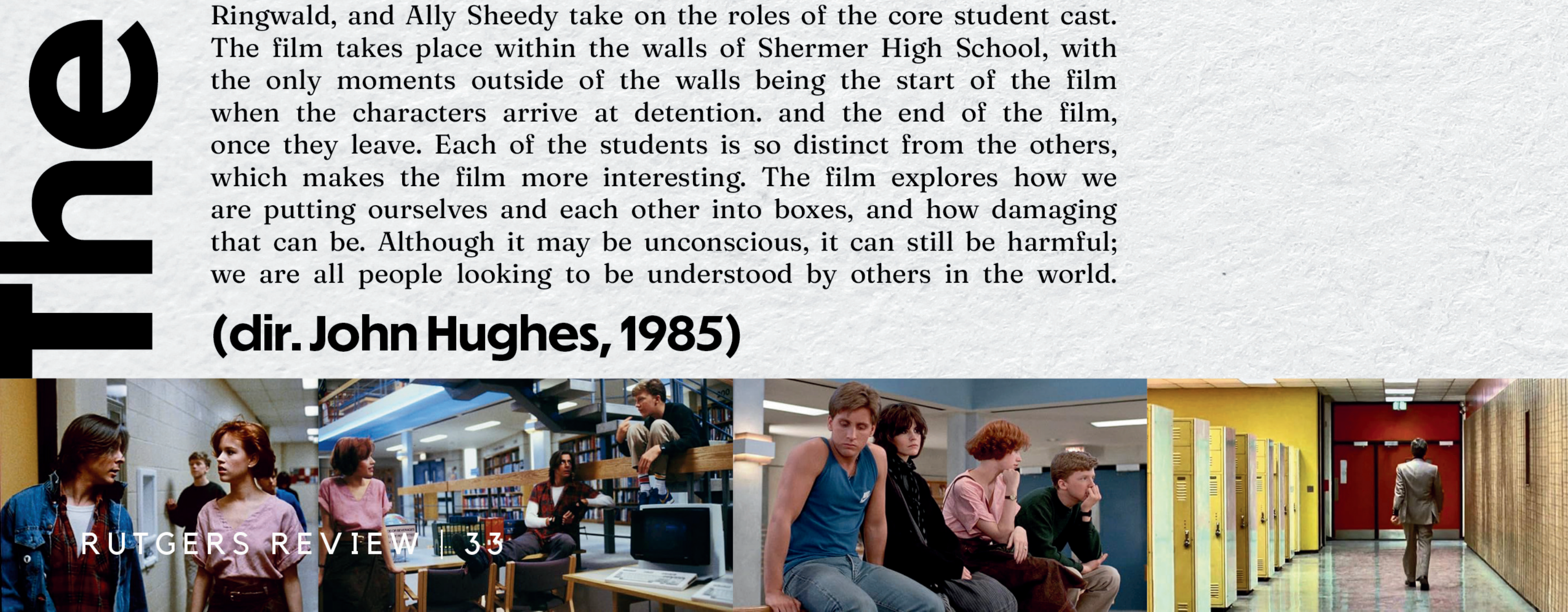
The Florida Project follows a young girl named Moonee, who lives in a motel near Walt Disney World with her mother, Halley. Her mother is a single parent who struggles to make ends meet. Moonee makes friends with the other children who live at the motel, and they all embark on several adventures throughout the summer. The film is most easily described as a coming-of-age story for both the children and their (young) parents. The film explores themes of losing one's childhood innocence due to financial hardships and how poverty can still exist in proximity to a place known as the "Happiest Place on Earth." The child actors in the film portray their roles so realistically that the film almost feels like a documentary.

(dir. Sean Baker, 2017)

The Breakfast Club

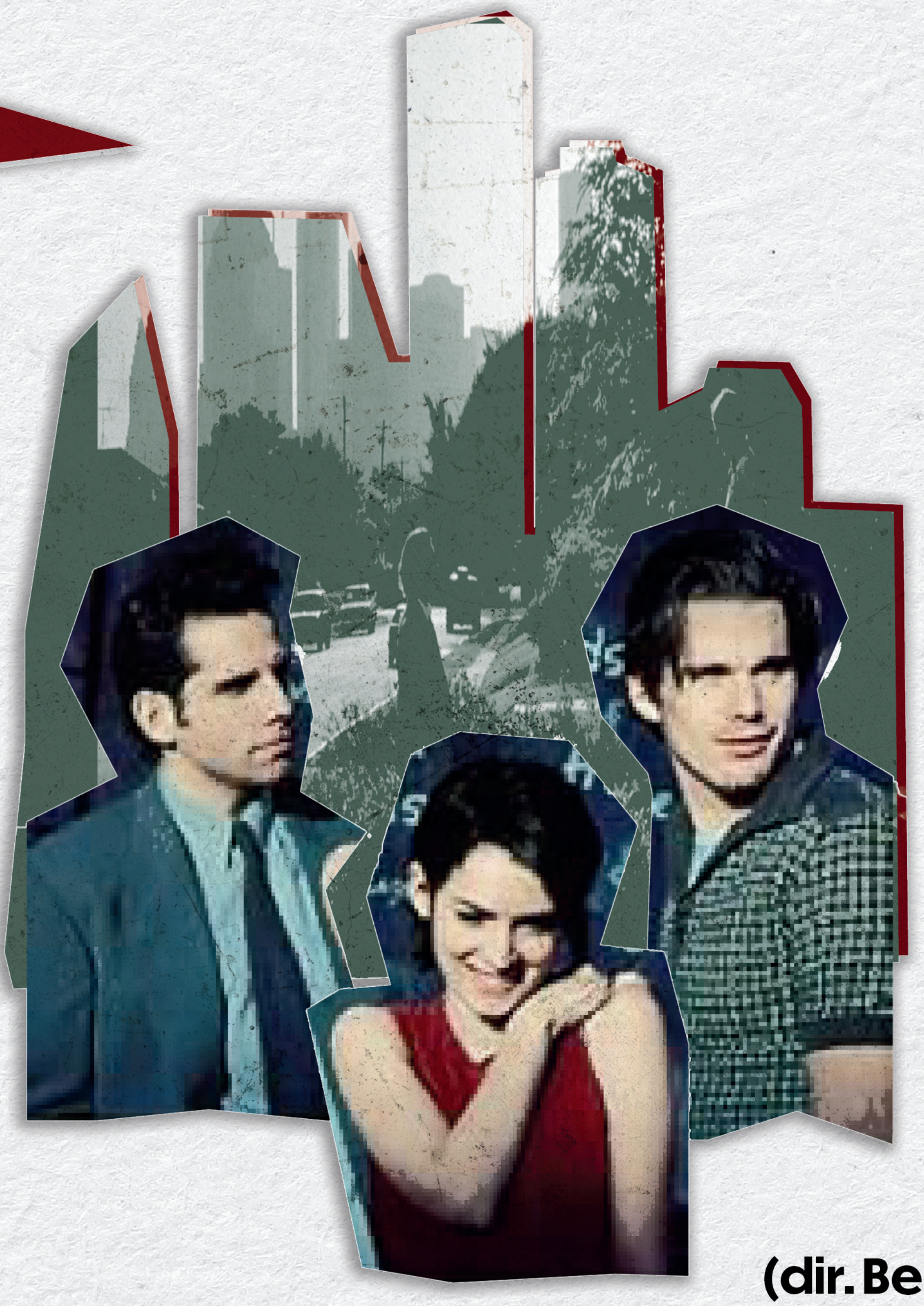
The '80s classic *The Breakfast Club* follows a group of high school students from different social groups who come together at Saturday detention under the strict supervision of their vice principal.Emilio Estevez, Paul Gleason, Anthony Michael Hall, Judd Nelson, Molly Ringwald, and Ally Sheedy take on the roles of the core student cast. The film takes place within the walls of Shermer High School, with the only moments outside of the walls being the start of the film when the characters arrive at detention. and the end of the film, once they leave. Each of the students is so distinct from the others, which makes the film more interesting. The film explores how we are putting ourselves and each other into boxes, and how damaging that can be. Although it may be unconscious, it can still be harmful; we are all people looking to be understood by others in the world.

(dir. John Hughes, 1985)



Reality Bites

Reality Bites follows a group of recent college graduates as they navigate the complexities of adulthood. The film stars Winona Ryder, Ethan Hawke, and Ben Stiller, and is historically celebrated for its references to 1990s pop culture– as well as nods to pop culture from the 1970s and 1980s. The film's soundtrack is also a standout, as it includes artists from a multitude of genres, highlighting Gen X and Millennial angst. The movie is important and stands the test of time because of its enduring relatability. Being a young adult in any climate is difficult, especially today, but films like this make people feel like they're not alone, even from over 30 years in the past. The themes of coming of age and the complexities of relationships are more prevalent now than ever.



(dir. Ben Stiller, 1994)

Modern *Girlhood* in Manolos

Greta Vassallo

I always tell my male friends that they should watch *Sex and the City* if they want to learn something about women. From breakups to friendships to fashion, the show encompasses so many relatable life lessons. Each of the core four (Carrie, Samantha, Charlotte, and Miranda, respectively) has a distinct and iconic personality, yet together they give the viewers endless laughs and heartfelt girlhood moments. Girlhood is the thing that allows women to relate to each other and feel better about their choices or mistakes. Sex and the City defines modern girlhood by showing the strength of female friendships, different relationships, fashion, and the ability to thrive at any age.

Close female friendships give you a shoulder to cry on, someone to ask your questions to, someone to talk about the same thing over and over with– and not get bored–, and so much more. Carrie and the girls act as a family. They argue and call each other out like sisters, and are there for each other in the most vulnerable of moments. After watching all six seasons many times over, I have noticed that all the girls have had moments where they realize they can go to their friends for almost anything. When Miranda has a baptism for Brady, she tells Carrie that the girls are her family and wants them to be there. When Carrie is getting over one of her breakups, she tells the group, "Why would I need a therapist when I have you guys!". And when a few of the girls seem to be in crisis over their breakup, Charlotte says how they can be each other's soulmates. They show love and support for one another, no matter the mistakes they may make. One can see how meaningful trustworthy female friends are in providing support and community that can't be replaced or disrupted by a relationship.

But in almost every episode, someone is dating a new guy, and it sometimes is all they can talk about. *SATC* not only showcases nearly every scenario you could run into with a guy, but it also teaches you something about a variety of different people you could meet. The girls show us what to do in difficult situations, or better yet, what not to do.

Both Carrie and Miranda get back together with their ex-boyfriends multiple times, even though they haven't been the best for them. When you might be yelling at the screen, telling Carrie not to do something, she can't help but revert to old patterns with Mr. Big. She hurts her friends and his new wife in the process, and only realizes the harm she has done later. Later on, Carrie meets a genuinely nice guy, but still can't stop thinking about the man who had commitment issues and never took her seriously until he couldn't have her. Miranda also has a good guy in her life, Steve, but she always finds a reason to push him away. She self-sabotages this relationship until he is with someone new, and then she realizes what her feelings were. These dynamics can teach viewers to be honest about their feelings and set boundaries in relationships. We see some romantic couple goals moments and some absolute deal breakers. Harry and Charlotte make each other laugh and love despite their flaws, but her ex-husband, Trey, had some mother and commitment issues that he didn't reveal to Charlotte until their marriage was in ruin. This teaches girls not to rush into a relationship too fast, and that being with someone you can be yourself around is the best thing.

SATC has also given viewers around the world fashion inspo for almost three decades. Carrie definitely takes the lead in influence in this area; she always has the most unique and best-fitting pieces, whether they are designer or thrifted. She probably spends a little too much of her paycheck on shoes and new outfits– but so do a lot of girls, and there is nothing wrong with that. A few of her most iconic outfits are the Christian Dior newspaper dress, the tutu intro outfit, the red "Big goes to Paris" dress, and the perfect everyday grey mini dress. Carrie always has the perfect look for every occasion and always has the best revenge dress when she runs into an old fling. On the other hand, some of her style choices are controversial and make people ask, *Is it a fit or is it just Carrie Bradshaw?*

Finally, the core four show us that

Looking & Feeling Fabulous

The girls are in their mid to late thirties for most of the show and never let someone tell them what they can and can't do based on their age. The show displays the girls standing up for themselves: Carrie insists on the cover of her book staying in the direction she wants, rather than the sexy image her publishers tell her will sell. Additionally, throughout the show, Miranda talks back when people make faces or comments criticizing her for being single; she makes fun of the girls being the only single people at a party, and how people treat her differently because of it. Furthermore, Samantha has always been confident in her own skin, but she embraces it even more in the hard times in season 6 when she goes through chemotherapy treatments for breast cancer.

The girls' different personalities allow viewers to look at them and see aspects of themselves in a popular TV show. One may relate to Charlotte's optimism and Samantha's confidence, and another may connect to Miranda's humor and Carrie's dependability. These moments provide life lessons in friendship, relationships, and self-esteem, and are just a few of the many layers that *Sex and the City* shows of being a single girl in New York.

does not have an age limit.

EMILY ZHAO

THE ART OF Studio Ghibli can never be captured by AI

My favorite way to destress and relax after a long, stressful day is to get into cozy PJs, grab a bowl of popcorn, and watch a Studio Ghibli movie. I had just submitted a long-term project that I had been working on for over a month, and though I loved working on it, I was ready to be done. I needed something comforting after days of focusing on school, and I knew that Sudio Ghlibi would be the perfect cure. The enchanting storylines and relatable characters make it easy to forget about the worries that consumed me during the day. Each film possesses a quiet, comforting magic – whether it's the gentle domestic life in My Neighbor Totoro or the soft hum of the train in Spirited Away. Studio Ghibli movies have a way of slowing down time and romanticizing daily life that might otherwise seem mundane.

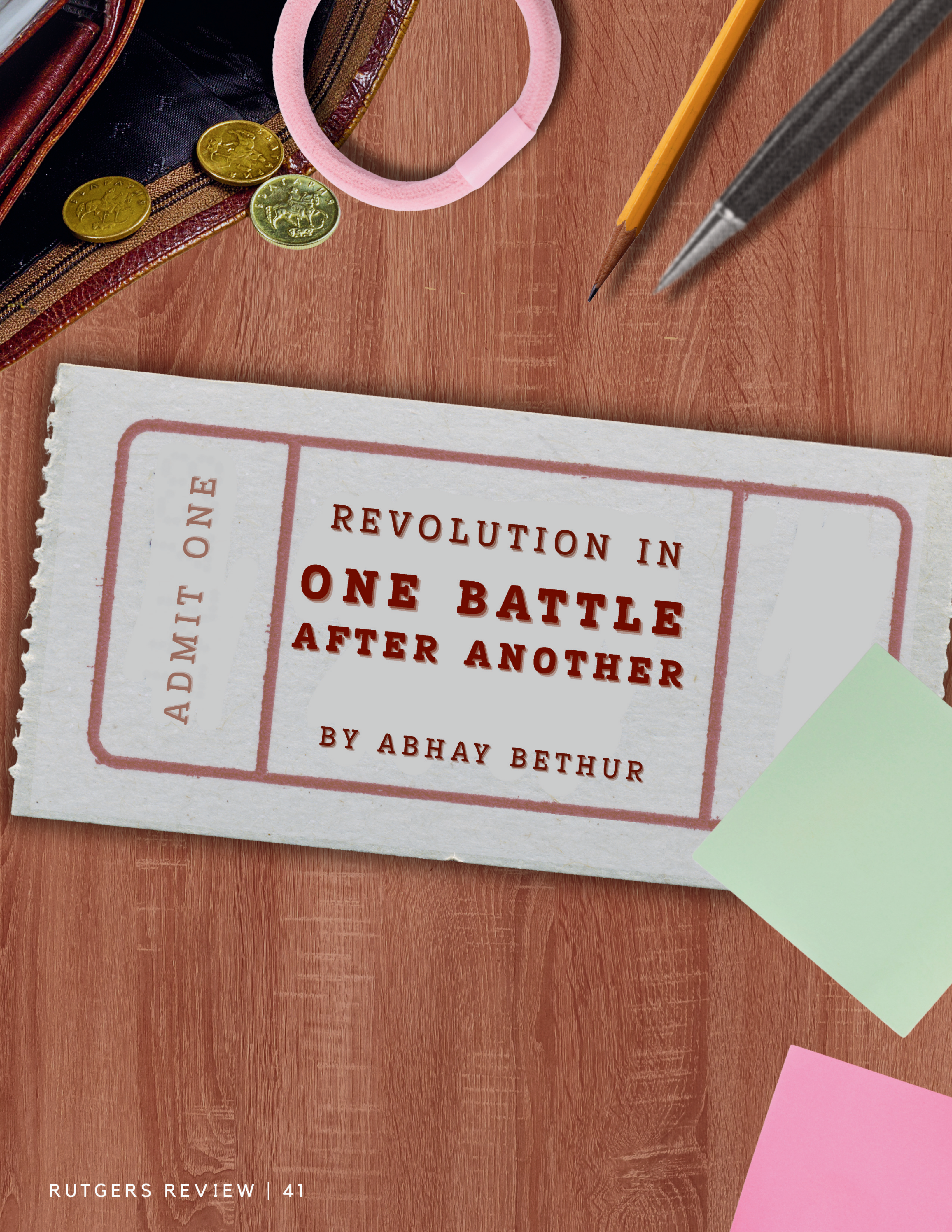
No matter which movie I am watching, the colors and animations all have the same distinct style. Anyone who has watched even one film could instantly tell if a scene is from a Studio Ghibli movie. The warm colors give a cozy, nostalgic feeling that mirrors the earthy undertones of nature, making the films feel comfortable and serene. The backgrounds resemble watercolor landscapes, and the characters move with a fluid motion. One of my favorite scenes is from Castle in the Sky, where the floating island of Laputa is crumbling. Chunks of earthy stone fall from the sky, followed by tree roots and building walls, while the song "Destruction of Laputa" plays eerily in the background. The scene is somehow beautiful despite the tragic end of the island in the sky. All of this is thanks to the talented efforts of the animators who spend countless hours designing each scene. And of course, a great deal of the magical aspect of these films has been influenced by the director Hayao Miyazaki.

Studio Ghibli primarily employs traditional hand-drawn 2D animation; each frame is meticulously sketched and painted with precision before being scanned and digitally colored. Although Miyazaki remains firm in his use of hand-drawn animation in his films, he has incorporated minimal CGI into his works. However, he is strongly critical of the use of AI. In 2016, Miyazaki viewed an AI animation program and expressed his disgust. He called AI an "insult to life itself." He has made his stance quite clear that AI can never replicate the emotions that come from real life, and that he would never incorporate AI into Studio Ghibli. Knowing that each scene is created by hand rather than machine, I respect the movies more and always think of the talented artists while watching the films. It pains me to see that artists who spend countless hours perfecting their craft are being overlooked due to the rise of AI art.

This stance contrasts with the recent trend of using AI to transform photos into a Studio Ghibli-style creation. People online have been using OpenAI's GPT-4o image generation to create images in the Studio Ghibli style by asking AI to apply Miyazaki's distinct animation style to their own pictures. Although this trend was widespread and many people engaged with it, it also drew considerable backlash and criticism. Many people commented on the irony of using an energy-intensive AI site to mimic an art style known for its natural and calming aesthetic. Critics and fans argue that Studio Ghibli isn't just about the aesthetic animation– it's about the hand-drawn details and time-intensive craftsmanship that contribute to the storytelling. Many agree that AI will never be able to replicate that level of creativity.

> "Critics and fans argue that Studio Ghibli isn't just about the aesthetic animation; it's about the hand-drawn details and time-intensive craftsmanship that contribute to the storytelling."

Creativity requires time and care, and Studio Ghibli is a prime example of this. These films have reached millions across the world because people appreciate the art of human talent and storytelling. Although AI art is quickly on the rise and will likely not go away anytime soon, we can help keep hand-drawn art alive by supporting artists and animators. If you're ever feeling stressed or overwhelmed with life's tasks and want a break from reality, I suggest watching a Studio Ghibli film and embarking on an adventure.



REVOLUTION IN ONE BATTLE AFTER ANOTHER

BY ABHAY BETHUR

Revolution doesn’t follow a single path. It usually takes many different forms, from violence as seen in the American Revolutionary War to the peaceful transition of power seen in the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia. In One Battle After Another, written and directed by Paul Thomas Anderson, these contrasting forms are brought to the forefront of the movie. The movie emphasizes not portraying one as better or more effective, but rather exploring the complex nature of their relationship and how often the ideas that drive them are driven by the same desire to force change.

In the movie, it juxtaposes the French 75s' militant tactics with the Sensei’s, played by Benicio Del Toro, quieter, community-oriented, Underground Railroad-type activism. The French 75, inspired by the Weather Underground —a militant far-left group in the 1960s and 1970s —used a bombing campaign to spark change. They would bomb government buildings and banks, but give several evacuation warnings ahead of time to prevent any casualties. The French 75, like most far-left militant groups, is portrayed as believing that nonviolent methods were ineffective for creating change. The film doesn't spend any time justifying whether it was an effective method; instead, it shifts its focus to the people it inspired and helped.

The Sensei is portrayed as one of these people, operating an underground railroad for illegal immigrants. While you can argue that he did more to help people than the French 75, he still revered the organization. PTA shows how, while the French 75 tried to force change through brute force, the Sensei instead aimed to help those in need and maintain a quieter sense of defiance. Through this lens, the movie shifts focus from which method is more effective to the intertwined natures of revolutions and how they evolve from generation to generation. You see this by the end of the movie when the mantle is fully passed to Willa, Bob, and Perfidia's daughter. The film ends with her joining a protest, illustrating how revolution never truly ends but carries on from one generation to the next.

BRINGING THE SUPERHERO BACK: JAMES GUNN'S SUPERMAN

By Karren Miller-Sweeper

In July 2025, James Gunn and Warner Bros. released their highly anticipated *Superman*. The film was meant as a reboot of the DC cinematic universe, properly titled the “DCU.” As someone who didn’t care for *Superman*, I walked into the movie with my friend at a local theater with very low expectations and a general idea of who Superman was: A boring and brooding superhero who was allergic to Kryptonite, which is largely as much as the general public knows about the character. I had never watched a portrayal of Superman before, and had definitely never read a Superman comic book. I was intrigued to see the film after seeing such praise for it online on platforms like TikTok and Letterboxd.

I walked out of the film with a newfound sense of hope for the future, which is something I never would have expected from a superhero movie, especially in today's world. Given the bleakness of today’s political climate (rise of fascism and spread of misinformation) and climate change, we need superheroes who bring hope and catharsis now more than ever.

In 1978, Richard Donner's "Superman: The Movie" dominated the box office, introducing the iconic superhero to the big screen. It is widely regarded as one of the best early comic book superhero movies. It follows the origin story of Superman from his home planet of Krypton to the farm of his adopted parents in Smallville, Kansas–where he goes by the name Clark Kent–, to his life as a reporter in the city of Metropolis. The film is colorful and action-packed, emphasizing the importance of Clark Kent in a Superman movie as well as his superhero alter ego.

In 2013, Zack Snyder released "Man of Steel," his take on the Superman origin story. This film was also very successful at the box office, marking the beginning of the DC Extended Universe (different from the DCU) However, one of the reasons I think people (including myself) thought that Superman was such a boring and lifeless character was because of this adaptation. Snyder's Superman feels so far removed from Clark Kent, which removes Superman from all humility. Superman isn't Superman without Clark Kent bringing him down to earth and making him human, which this movie fails to do. Snyder's Superman even kills people, in direct contradiction to Superman's core values. The film is dull and lifeless, similar to the current oversaturation of comic book movies in the 2010s and early 2020s.

James Gunn's 2025 Superman is one of my favorite movies of the year. Bright colors and fantastic music choices aside, the film exudes a level of hope that is not commonly seen in superhero movies. The film follows Superman/Clark Kent (played by David Corenswet) as he goes up against a classic Superman villain, Lex Luthor (played by Nichalous Hoult). The rest of the cast includes Rachel Bronsnahan as Lois Lane, Edi Gathegi as Mister Terrific, Nathan Fillion as Guy Gardner, Isabela Merced as Hawkgirl, Skyler Gisondo as Jimmy Olsen, and Sara Sampaio as Eve Teschmacher. Superman battles not only his identity, but also his morals in relation to who he should save and when people need saving.

Many people walked out of the film with a newfound sense of determination and hope that society can be steered in the right direction with the influence of good people–in this case, Superman. Gunn's Superman doesn't kill, and does what every good superhero would do: Saves squirrels. Now, having superheroes that have super strength and the ability to shoot lasers out of their eyes is not entirely possible right now, but influence is what is important. Seeing New Yorkers rise in support for Zohran Mamdani, and seeing people like Greta Thunberg stand up for people in Palestine, are the type of "superheroes" that are accessible, and the kind of ones we need now more than ever.

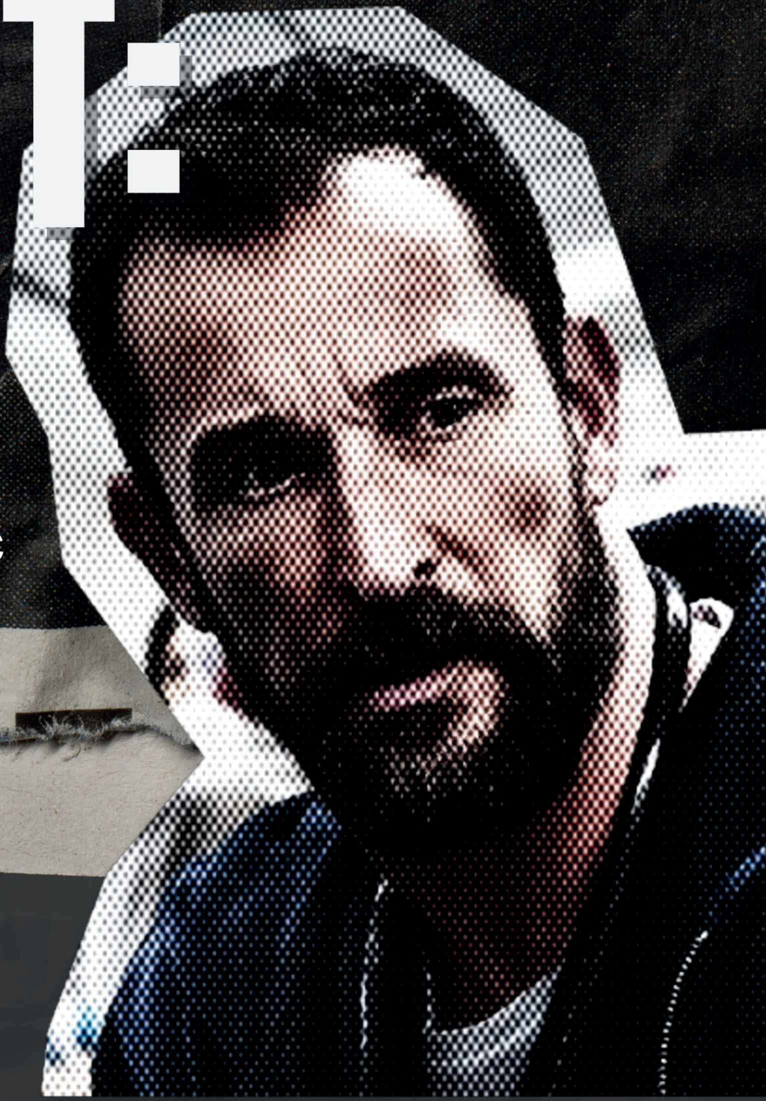
Superman's speech in *Superman* (2025) stands out to me the most. "I'm as human as anyone. I love, I get scared. I wake up every morning and, despite not knowing what to do, I put one foot in front of the other and I try to make the best choices I can. I screw up all the time, but that is being human, and that's my greatest strength." Being human isn't about just waking up every day and living your life; it's about how you live it. Finding the importance of community and connection is what being human is all about. Being able to recognize what society has to work on is more human than anything else.

Since watching *Superman* (2025), it has taken over my life. I now annoy everyone around me all of the time about Superman history and every live-action Superman adaptation. The people around me may be sick of hearing about Superman, but deep down, I think Superman gives them the same level of hope as I do.

THE PITT:

A Modern Medical Masterpiece

Gabriella Zejavac



Few pieces of media manage to balance character and conflict. Plot heavy shows and movies are usually action packed thrillers or dramatic mysteries that fail to give the audience a character they care about. On the other extreme, character studies often focus so much on internal elements that the external conflict is either stale or non-existent. The very best of visual media understands the importance of an equal focus on both elements; they don't just focus on a character's past, they focus on how their past influences their reactions to conflict. This exact concept is what makes *The Pitt* (2025) such a perfect show.

The Pitt is a medical drama centered around an ensemble of ER employees. There's a large range of interesting characters the audience meets from doctors and medical students to patients and EMTs. Although many elements of the drama grab people's interest, the show's real hook is the fact that the entire thing is in real time. Every episode is one hour of a shift with fifteen episodes in total, making the entire season set in one singular day. When I first heard this, I had no idea how that could possibly be interesting. How can you keep an audience's attention within a fifteen hour timeframe? I was quickly proven wrong.

The genius of The Pitt being set in an ER is that there is non-stop conflict. A continuous flow of patients piles on new problems every minute. There is never a dull moment. You would think that means there is no time for elaborate character development but no, the genius of the showrunners strikes again. This is where the show truly shines. With little time to exposit backstory for every new person, *The Pitt* expertly drops hints that tell you everything you need to know about every character. You're thrown into this shift in the same way the new medical student characters are. You're meeting all these people for the first time and the only way you can get to know them is by seeing how they respond to the situations they're thrusted into. It feels like a real situation instead of a fabricated story

"I urge everyone to check out this modern masterpiece"

A fact many audience members, medical professionals and everyday viewers, can agree on is that *The Pitt* feels real. Not only does it feel genuine through its stellar character work, the show actually manages to accomplish medical accuracy.

Because I am deeply obsessed with the series, I have watched mountains of video commentary on it, many by real doctors. There is a general consensus that *The Pitt* is *the* most accurate medical show in the history of television. The creators of the show clearly have such a genuine appreciation for the medical community and every viewer walks away with a similar appreciation.

The Pitt even develops an entire sideplot to bring awareness to the nursing crisis currently ongoing in the US. Many issues in the show are caused due to the hospital being understaffed (which is especially common in ERs) and nurses struggling with being underappreciated and under-paid by executives. It is so clear that the creators and producers genuinely respect the work done by these essential employees and seeing that portrayed so emphatically on television feels like a breath of fresh air.

On top of the many immaculate things about this genuinely perfect television series, *The Pitt* has some of the most astounding performances I have ever seen. Noah Wyle stands out in his lead role but many other actors give fantastic portrayals of their characters. Katherine LaNessa won an Emmy for her supporting role as the charge nurse Dana and Shawn Hatosy won for his supporting role of Dr. Abbot (despite having very little screentime). What is so amazing about these two actors is that they are only now receiving recognition for their work at 58 (LaNessa) and 49 (Hatosy). Neither of them have received awards for any other roles and have mostly played side characters or main characters in unknown projects. It is refreshing to see actors being appreciated when many are told they missed their chance after reaching a certain age.

Noah Wyle unsurprisingly won an Emmy for his lead acting performance as Dr. Robby and the series itself surprisingly won the Emmy for Best Drama, beating out highly renowned shows like Severence, The White Lotus, and The Last of Us. Though The Pitt certainly was the most deserving as its amazing cast and creators managed to create a television series that was completely revolutionary and never done before.

I have been recommending The Pitt to nearly every single person I speak to and I hope it continues to receive more and more new viewers. It is definitely worth the watch and I truly believe it is one of the best series I have ever seen. I urge everyone to check out this modern masterpiece and tune in for the season two premiere in January of 2026.

MUSIC

STEVE LACY
LOBO
RANGER NATURALIST SERVICE
LASSEN VOLCANIC NATIONAL PARK
JUMP 'N FUNK Revival
Rich Medina and PQ
NARCOTI CURE
DOORS
AUG. 5
LAVENDER HILL MOB
JOINT EFFORT
CAPT. SPEED
New Jersey FOLK Festival 2024
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Cook Campus | Rutgers University
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
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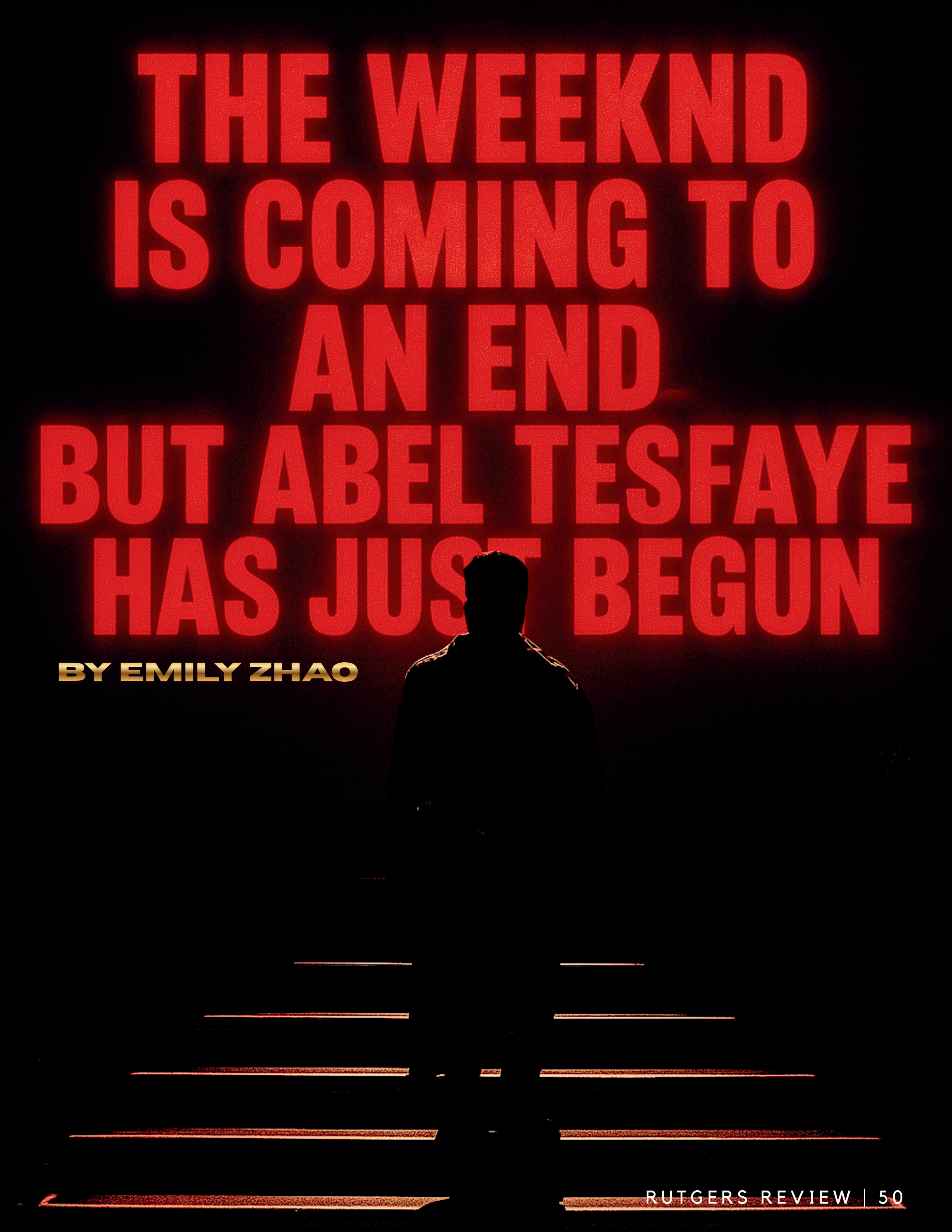
BOB MARLEY Birthday Bash Night
PEACH
LIVE STREAMED FROM THE CO
09.20
THE PIT STOP
ASBURY PARK 2024
ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
The Barber Shop

THE WEEKND IS COMING TO AN END BUT ABEL TESFAYE HAS JUST BEGUN

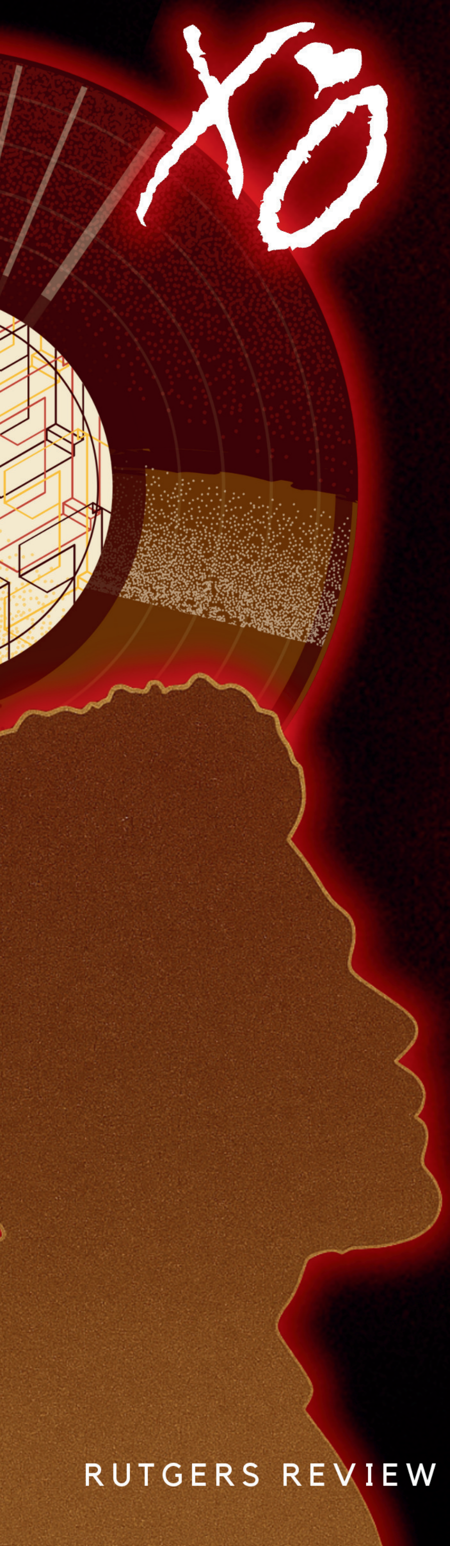
BY EMILY ZHAO



My friend was lucky enough to win the Ticketmaster war, securingour tickets in the bathroom during her chemistry class.

On June 5th, we drove an hour to MetLife Stadium, and thankfully, there was little traffic because we left early. After spending 30 minutes walking around the stadium searching for merch, we bought matching t-shirts and then got our first glimpse of the stage.

I've seen pictures of the stage before, but nothing could compare to seeing the actual stage in person. The sun glinted off the crumbling remains of the constructed dystopian city, making the buildings seem to glow. The statue stood tall in the center. The stadium seemed so big, and it was hard to imagine that in a few hours, it would be filled with 80,000 fans.



The dystopian city, the flashing lights, the statue. We took pictures, got overpriced food, and then sat at our seats and waited for the music to start. After Mike Dean's and Playboi Carti's performance, it was finally time.

In the weeks leading up to the concert, my friend and I would send each other videos of other people at his past shows. I was ready to experience the same thing I felt as I watched through the videos. I was wrong. No video could capture the essence of the concert. You just had to be there to experience the flashing lights, the flawless transition from each song, and the crowd screaming the lyrics in unison.

From the first sounds of "The Abyss" to the final fireworks during "Moth to a Flame," the entire two hours was amazing.

Post-concert depression hit me hard, and I spent the following weeks rewatching the concert videos I filmed, even though all the videos were blurry.

I might cave and buy tickets to see him again in Europe. Who knows? If your music taste is elite, I might see you there. Money comes and goes, but tickets to see Abel's last performance as The Weeknd are not forever.

The Weeknd is coming to an end, but Abel Tesfaye has just begun.

So why does he want to leave his stage name behind when he is successful?

In 2022, The Weeknd lost his voice at Sofi Stadium, the final stop of his North America "After Hours Til Dawn" tour. Although he apologized and later played at multiple make-up shows when his voice returned, the impact of that moment on stage has not entirely faded and may have been the spark to the retirement of the stage name.

Before you start panicking that you will never hear another song or experience a Weeknd concert again, I just want to make it clear: The Weeknd is just retiring his persona as The Weeknd, not from making music. He will still be in the music industry, just under his birth name: Abel Tesfaye.

“My voice has always been my secret weapon,” the singer said., “my superpower to get through whatever I need to get through. And in that moment, reality hit: Everything can change after this moment.”

And everything did change. Soon, people began to see billboards in major cities where the Weeknd commonly toured. The words appeared to say, “The Weeknd is Near,” however, there was space in place of three of the letters, so the billboard actually read “The End is Near.”

Fans took this as a sign that this tour in 2025 was his last tour as The Weeknd, especially following the announcement of his latest album, Hurry Up Tomorrow, which he hinted would mark his final chapter as The Weeknd.

Hurry Up Tomorrow completes the After Hours trilogy, following the albums After Hours and Dawn FM. After Hours follows the singer as he spirals through fame and heartbreak, and then in Dawn FM, he hovers in a space between life and death. Hurry Up Tomorrow is the final phrase in the spiritual journey, as he confronts the darkest parts of himself and finds the light of redemption.

The Weeknd describes the final album as, “touching on a kind of purgatory and getting to the darkest part until you find light at the end of the tunnel.” He transitions from chaos to clarity as he undertakes a personal transformation through his music, as reflected in his songs and albums. Fans interpret this as a farewell to a persona he’s embodied for over a decade.

The album concludes The Weeknd’s time as The Weeknd and serves as a full-circle moment, since the last song on the album connects with the first song on the first album.

His North America tour dates were announced after the release of his album, Hurry Up Tomorrow, which marked the end of his time as The Weeknd.

He planned to leave behind his name as The Weeknd after the release of his third album in the trilogy. Hurry Up Tomorrow.

THE LIFE OF A SHOWGIRL: A REVIEW

by Alina Arshad

The Life of a Showgirl was released by Taylor Swift on October 3rd, and it has been one of her most polarizing albums in recent years.

I personally feel that overall the theme of the album felt ill-fitting to what the tracks consisted of. For me, I knew that anything following The Tortured Poets Department would not hold up to expectations so they were never high to begin with. Not only that but it has not been long enough between albums to produce anything of caliber. There is not enough time between the two albums for proper workshopping and editing of songs and it shows. The Tortured Poets Department was released in 2024, it has only been a year since and she has just wrapped up the Eras Tour. The creative burnout is palpable throughout the record.

I have never heard a Taylor Swift song and thought "Wow this is underwritten, she should have edited more." Eldest Daughter is a trail blazer in that sense. The metaphor of eldest daughters being lambs who dressed up as wolves is unclear. In general, the archetype of what it means to be an "eldest daughter" and how it affects Swift is left unexplored.

I am of the opinion that she needs to go back to her two year album cycles and start doing pre-release singles again.

THE FATE OF OPHELIA

It was pointed out by someone that there is an element of folklore and fairytale in The Fate of Ophelia which misrepresents Ophelia's character. While I agree I would like to push back against that as a critique of Swift's work because in pop culture Ophelia is treated similarly to the little mermaid. She dies in tragedy from a broken heart and that's romantic. Of course it inspires painters and poets and songwriters.

The issue with this song for me is that it doesn't engage with the source material enough. Ophelia is just serving as a comparison to highlight how Swift feels that she has been saved by love. The singer doesn't really have much agency in this narrative either. I suppose you can say the same of Hamlet, but that lack of agency serves a purpose to highlight how the way Hamlet acts is affecting those around him. Ophelia is a ghost in this song, she is not present in the narrative the song hinges on her being dead, she's excluded from her own narrative.

ELIZABETH TAYLOR

The standout track of the record for me.

The main critique I have of this track is that the line we are drawing between Elizabeth Taylor and Taylor Swift isn't as clear as it should be. "Clara Bow," a track from The Tortured Poets Department, for example, doesn't delve too deep into the complexities of this figure's life, but still the lyric shift to "you look like Taylor Swift/ In this light" makes the comparison clear to the listener.

In this case, you're relying on background knowledge of the reputation of these two women and their relationship with heartbreak to add meaning to the song, which I think makes it a weaker song conceptually .But, the production, vocals, and everything else about it is perfect.

The "oh so glamorous" cabaret version has the most wonderful jazzy production which is what I wish played into more of the album. Having a vintage showgirl undercut to this could have added sophistication to the record while keeping some of the weaker and vaguer writing.

OPALITE

The concept of manmade happiness is not well illustrated in this song because it has this element of passivity to it which doesn't make it feel like any semblance of it is being constructed.

It's more of a "this too will pass" sort of wisdom that Swift's imparting onto the listener which doesn't go with the production as well.

The day and night metaphors in this song representing happy and sad are poorly executed compared to a song like "Midnight Rain," a song from Swift's previous Midnights album, where it's clear what the difference between the two is and the message of the song is far clearer. Midnight rain represents Swift's wild urges of fame, glitz and glamour, while her sunshine partner is sweet, soft and domestic.

FATHER FIGURE

For now, this is my favorite song on the record. It's not the best, however, and I would say that the greatest title goes to "Elizabeth Taylor" in terms of well executed vocals and concept.

"Father Figure" reflects a facet of Swift that we haven't explored before: her role as a ruthless business woman. The two roles in the song are of the mentor and mentee; the protege who goes against their mentor. Swift says she relates to both, when the lyrics at the end are accusatory, defensive and downright vindictive.

This doesn't paint her in a flattering light and yet, she wrote an honest song about herself as the villain in a way that isn't tacky and over exaggerated.

RUIN THE FRIENDSHIP

I don't really understand why this song fits the theme of the album. It is beautiful,l of course, that she made a song for her late high school friend Jeff Lang but it doesn't fit the showgirl theme, so I am not into this.

It could have been interesting to add an element of what if to this track. What if she had never been a showgirl and he hadn't passed away. Could they have been something more than friends?

ACTUALLY ROMANTIC

I love Charli XCX truly, but for the time that this track is playing I choose to be a hater.

I am so glad that "Better Than Revenge" Swift came to the phone for this. I do not think this is about "sympathy is a knife," I think Charlin XCX and Taylor have probably had some issues since the Reputation stadium tour. Swift clearly favoured Camilla Cabello over her on stage. My girlfriend described this song as toxic lesbianism, which is fitting. No man has ever loved me like you do.

WI$H LI$T

I hate this one, Travis Kelce is such a boring muse to me. I'm glad he makes Swift happy but I miss her previous boyfriends, Matty, Joe, and Harry. I liked them as muses in Taylor's narrative. I felt like I was in love and heartbroken by them too.

This album does not make me fall in love with Travis Kelce and that's such a shame because it should have. His inner world and what he wants for them is not explored at all. He is not characterized not pictured completely like he's out of focus.

She's screaming and fighting and kissing Joe Jonas in the rain, and then she sits on the floor wearing his clothes trying to be something he misses.

Jake Gyllenhaal listens to indie records that's much cooler than hers, he's red he's a crossword with no right answer, he was never a saint and she knew he was trouble when he walked in.

Harry Styles and her were in screaming color, running from hunters, finding wonderland, going mad and moving the furniture so they could dance like they stood a chance.

Joe Alywn is described often with the color blue, as the city of London, their relationship is a sad song, he has a lyrical smile, they get drunk together and laugh.

Matty Healy is a tortured poet, he's a tattooed golden retriever, his jokes are revolting and far too loud, he's the boy who never grew up, he's a hologram.

Travis Kelce in So High School is the clearest image there is of their relationship he's good in bed, and he knows how to ball she knows Aristotle. That's all the information I have.

WOOD

Frankly, I find it to be ridiculous and corny. No, absolutely not.

Taylor Swift can not write a cheeky song full of innuendos like Sabrina Carpenter. If she wants to do humor it works best as satire like Blank Space or Look What You Made Me Do.

Her songwriting is intelligent and well crafted so a more sophisticated take on a humorous song fits her identity as an artist. Taylor Swift takes herself far too seriously for this to come off as clever or funny from her. Sabrina Carpenter should have been featured on this instead of Life of a Showgirl.

CANCELLED

This one has been growing on me. I was afraid it was going to harken back to the pop-star's 2017 cancellation based on the title, and thankfully she has let that go. The dark side of herself that Swift likes to embrace and build mythology around is incredibly fascinating.

I did not enjoy the "or bring a tiny violin to a gun fight" lyric, I understand that it is meant to signify playing the victim in the situation. Instead I feel that it would be better to change to bring a gun to a knife fight to even more directly parallel Call it What You Want where she says brought a knife to a gun fight.

Since the song is embracing being in the perceived wrong in a situation I feel it fits and often Swift does tend to bring guns to knife fight, quite literally with Charli XCX on this record. It's an aspect of her persona which was forged by Reputation which I wish was explored more on the record.

HONEY

I like this song. It is a sweet concept and a better written love song than "Wood" or "Wi$h Li$t."

I am unsure of what it has to do with being a Showgirl, though. The lyrics about how the skirt "don't fit her and she cried the whole way home" may have led to how she has been patronized in show business.

THE LIFE OF A SHOWGIRL

I love title tracks, Swift always does a wonderful job with them. Red, The Tortured Poets Department, Lover, Fearless, Speak Now, and evermore. Each one serves as the thesis of the record, encapsulating the emotional journey that Swift intends to take you on.

Again I feel that the voices of Sabrina Carpenter and Taylor Swift are not well suited to a duet of this fashion. If Swift had brought back her country accent for the song or part of it the blend between them might have been improved. "you don't know the life of a showgirl babe, and you're never ever gonna" while this is true it feels as if it goes against Swifts entire career as a writer. Her songs are about emotional connection, the reason I am listening to this album is to know the life of a showgirl.

the rise of KATSEYE

by: Addison Dicang

Global girl group, KATSEYE, are the up and coming craze in the music world.

Members Sophia Laforteza, Lara Raj, Yoonchae Jeung, Megan Skiendiel, Daniela Avanzini, and Manon Bannerman come from diverse backgrounds from all over the globe.

Their popular songs "Touch," "Gnarly," and most recently "Gabriela" are garnering attention within the mainstream media. **But how did Katseye get to this point in their careers this fast?**

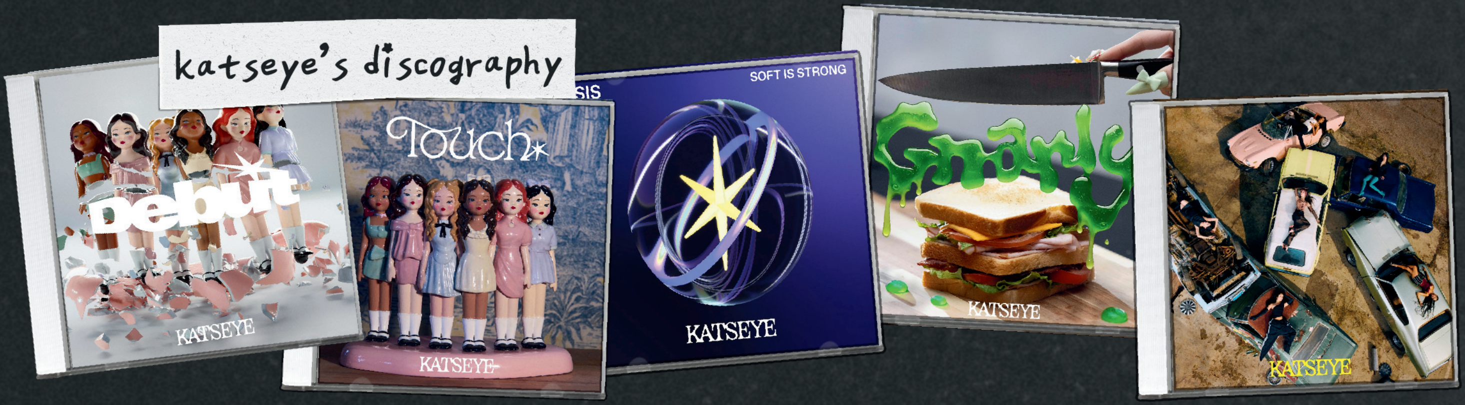
Dream Academy

Back during the Summer of 2023, two power house labels, HYBE and Geffen Records, teased their upcoming music survival show titled The Debut: Dream Academy. Airing from August to November, twenty female contestants took part in various dancing and singing challenges in hopes of making it into the final group which would consist of six members.

Throughout the process of these challenges, videos of the performances, behind the scenes, and more were primarily posted on YouTube, but other social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and the global fandom app, Weverse. From a combination of fan voting and judges votes, the group was formed, marking the end of The Debut: Dream Academy.

The six chosen members would go on to debut on June 28th, 2024 with their first single ironically titled "Debut". Although this song was a confident showcase of their abilities as a group to the entire world, it was their second song "Touch" that would go on to be a viral hit. As of now, the "Touch" audio has over 450,000 videos posted with it on TikTok. The addictive choreography and lyrics caught the attention of fans and media around the world. The groupy performed both "Debut" and "Touch" during their first ever stage at KCON Los Angeles 2024.

Sophia
Yoonchae
Lara
Danielle
Megan
Manon



Rise to Fame

After the success of their two singles, Katseye would release their debut EP, Sis (Soft Is Strong), on August 16th, 2024. This debut EP represents self-love and confidence, along with the strong bond between the girls, creating a sense of sisterhood between them. Their experiences through training, the survival show, and producing musical art has allowed them to form a bond like no other as they are able to understand each other on a deeper level.

For around the next eight months, Katseye performed at various events such as the 2024 MAMA Awards and the Jingle Ball (Boston and Fort Worth). Going into 2025, they had yet to tease or release any new music. This was until April 30th when they released arguably their most popular song, “Gnarly.”

Fans were puzzled by the genre of “Gnarly” as it was completely different from their previous songs. At first, the reactions were mostly negative. From the instrumentals, lyrics, choreography, and chaotic music video, “Gnarly” caught the attention of both fans and the media alike.

Despite this, “Gnarly” debuted at number 92 on the Billboard Hot 100, marking Katseye’s first ever career entry on the chart.

“Gnarly” served as the group’s pre-release single for their album Beautiful Chaos, which was released on June 27th. Their second EP served as a symbol of finding beauty where there is chaos.

Sophia, the leader of the group, says in an interview with Variety, “‘Beautiful Chaos’ is the season we’re all in. It’s very much us, but it’s also us constantly evolving and finding ourselves. It’s a big transitional part of Katseye, in discovering who we are and the different sides of us.”

On August 3rd, Katseye performed at undoubtedly the biggest stage of their careers: Lollapalooza Chicago. Appearing for only forty-five minutes on stage, they were able to perform nine of their songs with high energy and intense choreography. An estimated 85,000 people were in attendance for their set with millions turning in on social media. **With all the praise they were racking in and momentum they were building, why stop there?**

> "Beautiful Chaos is the season we're all in. It's very much us, but it's also us constantly evolving and finding ourselves."
>
> \- Sophia, about *Beautiful Chaos*

katseye for GAP

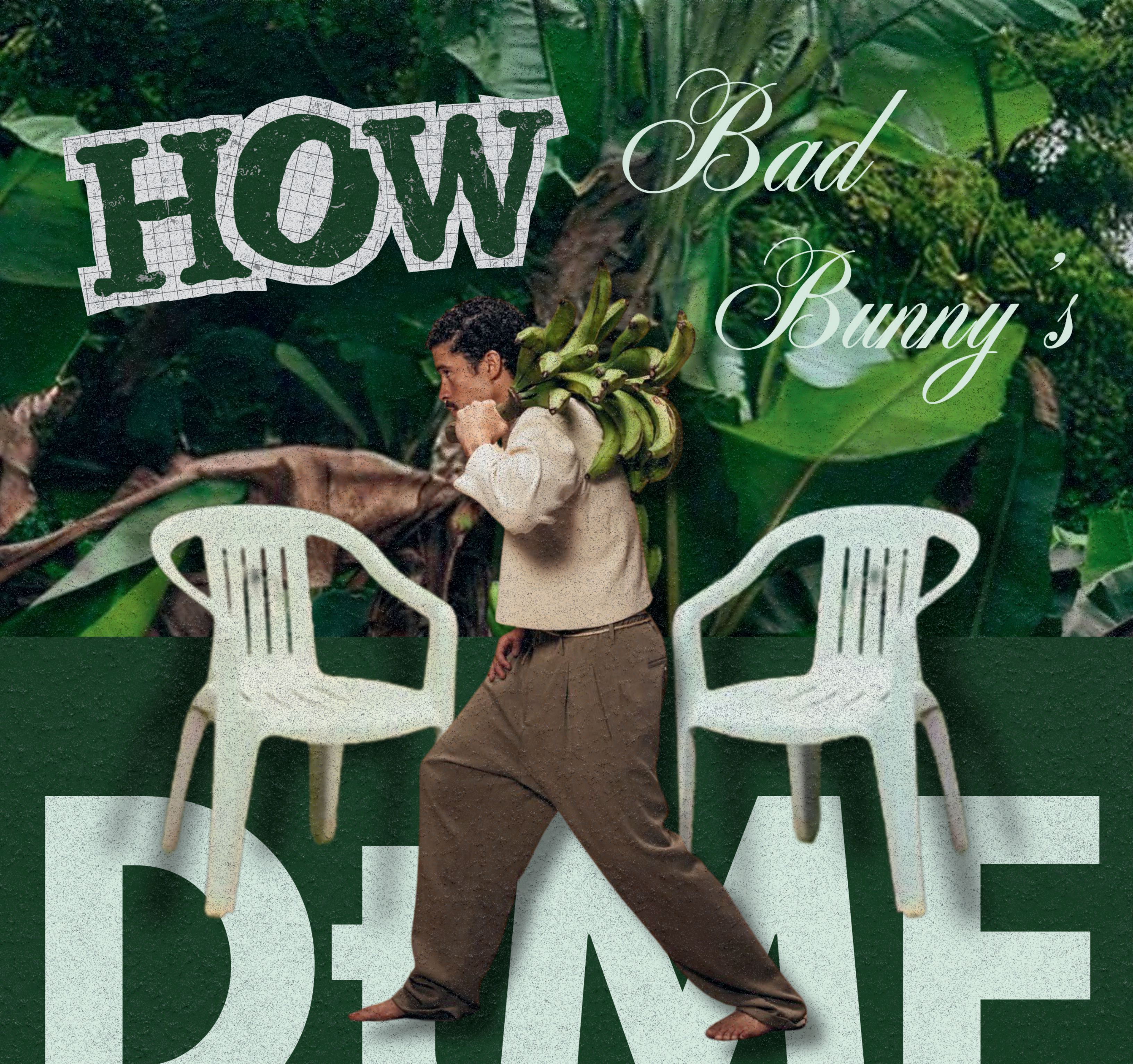
Katseye's diversity along with their musical talent and now skyrocketing fame put them in a position where they were ideal ambassadors for brands.

The Gap saw this as an opportunity and in late August, launched their new denim campaign featuring Katseye. The addictive choreography to the catchy song "Milkshake" by Kelis showcased a unique and addictive advertisement for jeans.

In addition, this advertisement coincidently released about a month after the controversial American Eagle campaign that featured Sydney Sweeney. Katseye's campaign has garnered around forty million views on YouTube and over a hundred forty million on TikTok.

With a little over a year into their official career, Katseye have been able to receive accomplishments and approval that many artists, even none, take years to achieve. Their next big stage will be in 2026 at one of, if not, the most popular music festival in the world:, Coachella.

As their fame is rising and their music is being streamed globally, they have the opportunity to reach new, higher levels like never before.



HOW Bad Bunny's DtMF CAPTIVATED THE WORLD

BY TATIANA COSTA

Since the release of his album DtMF, Puerto Rican artist Bad Bunny has catapulted into greater fame than he has ever known.

The NUEVAYoL singer is known for his upbeat music and has recently been named the top Latin artist of the 21st century by Billboard. Given his global popularity, it came as no surprise when he was announced to be the entertainment for the Super Bowl 2026 Half Time Show.

However exciting his performance may be for some, others have expressed their disappointment in this year's entertainment. Turning Point USA, a conservative organization, announced that they would be hosting an "All American Halftime Show" as an alternative to Bad Bunny. Despite the implication that he is "un-American," his being born in Puerto Rico automatically makes him a U.S. citizen.

DeBÍ TiRAR MáS FOToS Takes Over TikTok

The release of his new album represents a general shift in his work as an artist, a departure from his usual sound to something more mature and refined. The tone of his latest album feels more intimate, tinged with melancholy and nostalgia for the past, which can also be seen in his sampling of older songs throughout the album.

Bad Bunny has also become more emboldened to speak on political issues, with a focus on the problems plaguing his native Puerto Rico. In the past he has been outspoken on issues that affect his people, but now he has made it impossible for people to ignore these themes while interacting with his work.

In the title track of his latest album, Bad Bunny explores themes of longing and regret.
In the months after this song's release, people on apps like TikTok have used this section of the song to express their longing for their homeland and loved ones:

"Debí tirar más fotos de cuando te tuve / Debí darte más besos y abrazos las veces que pude / Ojalá que los míos nunca se muden / Y si hoy me emborracho, pues, que me ayuden"

"I should've taken more pictures when I had you / I should've given you more kisses and hugs whenever I could / Ayy, I hope my people never move away / And if I get drunk today, I hope they help me out"

Most notably, Palestinians in diaspora have posted photos to this sound from their trips to visit family in their homeland. Similarly, Palestinians living in Gaza have used the song to show how their lives looked before the two-year-long assault on their homes and way of life. This online trend has not only been used to document the physical extent of the damage caused by the war, but for occupied Palestinians to express the deep feelings of loss they have been burdened with.

Bad Bunny himself has expressed how he appreciates that this song resonates with so many people all over the world in an interview with Billboard, “it was really beautiful to see so many people from Latin America… Palestine…people from all over the world connecting with that song.” He went on to explain how he wrote this song about his own personal experiences of spending his formative years in Puerto Rico, with emphasis on themes of love and loss.

An Ode to Puerto Rico

LO QUE LE PASÓ A HAWAii is probably the most political of his songs on this album, where he explores themes of colonialism and gentrification. In this song, Bad Bunny identifies the connections between the annexation of Hawaii and the influx of outsiders into Puerto Rico. This song fits the general theme of loss and frustration at watching the places you grew up in change. The chorus of the song, which has been used online as an anthem for anticolonialism, expresses how outsiders have been pricing locals out of property:

“Quieren quitarme el río y también la playa / Quieren al barrio mío y que abuelita se vaya / No, no suelte' la bandera ni olvide' el lelolai / Que no quiero que hagan contigo lo que le pasó a Hawái”

“They want to take my river and my beach too / They want my neighborhood and grandma to leave / No, don't let go of the flag nor forget the lelolai / 'Cause I don't want them to do to you what happened to Hawaii”

The Nostalgic Sound of DtMF

NUEVAYoL is a song that not only celebrates Puerto Rico, but Latin American heritage as a whole. Un Verano en Nueva York by El Gran Combo de Puerto Rico, a song released in 1975, is sampled in the beginning and throughout the song. This ties into the overall theme of nostalgia found throughout the rest of the album, evoking this feeling of being gathered with family and friends simply enjoying life.

This song is an ode to the Latin American community in New York, and its music video shows the lively sense of community you encounter in these ethnic enclaves.

BAILE INoVIDABLE is a deceptively upbeat song, with lyrics that express feelings of grief for a love that was lost. Bad Bunny very cleverly uses dance as a metaphor for love and relationships, while the actual music of the song integrates salsa into its sound. He sings in the refrain:

“No, no te puedo olvidar / No, no te puedo borrar / Tú me enseñaste a querer / Me enseñaste a bailar”

“No, I can't forget you / No, I can't erase you / You taught me how to love / You taught me how to dance”

The nostalgic yet modern feel of this song reinforces this concept of longing for a past to which you can never return. The choice for this to be an upbeat salsa song makes it feel as though the singer is looking back on the relationship without hatred, but with gratitude for what he has learned.

He is beginning to come to terms with the fact that this love has ended and attempts to move on from the pain of losing someone dear to him. The singer still feels regret for how things transpired and tries to seek out the same love in other people, to no avail.

Bad Bunny’s incorporation of his own personal experiences touched many, with universal themes that people from all walks of life can relate to. His references to colonialism and grief especially resonated with people during the war in Gaza. Although he has been an activist for a long time, his new music is able to flesh out these ideas in a more tangible way.

JUNK DRAWER

Hot Sausage
I NY
Lamb Gyro
BEST NEW YORK
HOT DOG
BEST HOT DOG
SABRETT
CHICKEN GYRO LAMB
HOT DOG
JUMB
LAMB GYRO
SHISH KEBAB
HOT DOG

PHOTO BY MARIE TOOMEY

A Brief Exploration of Classic Technology and their Uses

By:
Noelle O'Neill

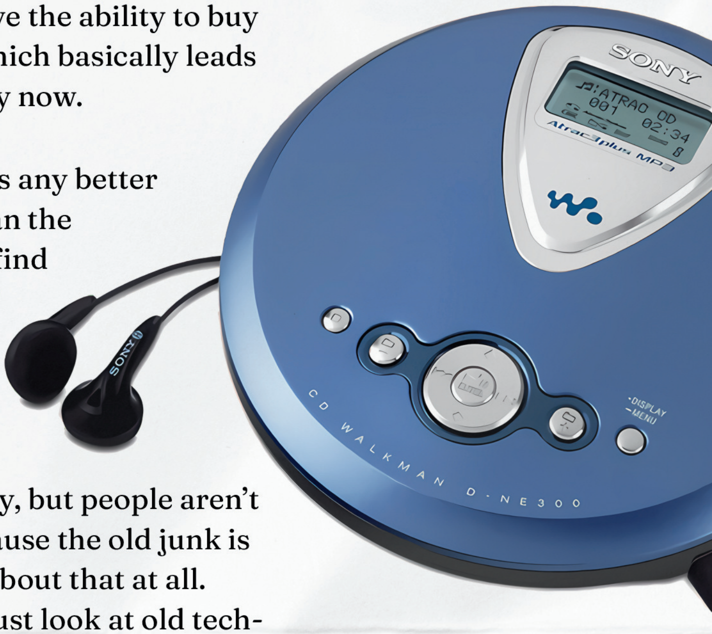
iPod
Music
Extras
Settings
Shuffle Songs
Backlight
menu

Over the last two decades, technology has continued to change—usually for the better!

Every day, it seems our devices are getting more convenient and advanced; every new model of phone seems to have better cameras, and every new gaming console seems to be even stronger than the last. On the surface, it's all very exciting! We live in a time where it seems there is some new gadget or idea every day, always something new that'll make our lives just a little bit easier than they were before.

However, it's often rare to find someone who is genuinely excited by recent innovations. While everything is at our fingertips now, people aren't always thrilled by our all-in-one devices that can really do just about anything. Many people have been wanting something different: instead of something more, it seems people have been longing for something less. Classic technology is coming back in style!

It's easy to explain this phenomenon, really. Much of it is rooted in nostalgia. The people who grew up surrounded by these things are now adults who have the ability to buy whatever they want, which basically leads to old stuff being trendy now.



Are any of these devices any better or more convenient than the equivalents you might find in modern technology? No! It goes without saying that the new stuff is technically superior in terms of convenience and quality, but people aren't making the switch because the old junk is better. Usually, it isn't about that at all. Sometimes, it's fun to just look at old technology and see how it's managed to evolve over the years, without worrying about what is and isn't superior.

Look at 2000s flip phones, for example! Looking back, most of these were pretty charming. There wasn't an exact design that all the companies were running with at the time, leading to them all to look a little—or sometimes very—different.

Every model had something special to offer, from a sliding keyboard to a screen that spins on an axis. The diversity in function is a far cry from the more uniform form factor we have now. Of course, their actual capabilities were much more limited compared to those of a modern smartphone. Their smaller keyboards made it harder to type messages, much less search for something on a browser. Not to mention that their built-in cameras were awful and are unable to hold a candle to what's available now.

At the time, you wouldn't usually be using your phone camera to take photos, though. Digital cameras were meant to do that; quite literally, they are a separate device made only for taking photos. Even now, there's a lot you can do with a camera like this! There are more external and internal options compared to a built-in phone camera. While it isn't as convenient as something that's always in your pocket, its quality is still unmatched!

1oo
2abc
3def
4ghi
5jkl
6mno
7pqrs
8tuv
9wxyz
c

On older phones, you typically wouldn't have your music player built-in, which is where MP3 players come in. Nowadays, they don't exactly have a benefit over a music library on your phone, and it can be inconvenient to transfer songs onto one now. Many of them don't have as much storage as modern devices, either. However, they weren't the only method of listening to music in the 2000s. Portable CD players were also commonly used by those who preferred totally physical media. However, that leads to one of their biggest downfalls: the number of songs you could have at any given time was dictated by the number of CDs you could carry. Still, it was another common option at the time, and one that's also having a resurgence in popularity.

Aside from phones, nostalgic gaming devices are also currently seeing a surge in popularity. If you go into any online gaming spaces, it's hard not to find a crowd of people reminiscing about the DS or PSP. Gaming devices are treated a little differently than the previously mentioned technologies, as the format in which you play a game actually affects the overall experience. Games are developed with specific hardware in mind, making it difficult to translate them to modern devices. Sometimes, enthusiasm around these devices is more than just nostalgia; sometimes, it really is the only way to experience these games!

SONY
PlayStation
POWER
OPEN
RESET
1
2

While there isn't a reason to use much of the tech from the 2000s now, it is still enjoyable to look back on it all and see how different it used to be.

Technology wouldn't be what it is now if it weren't for all the tech that came before it! In an age dominated by devices that want you hooked on them as long as possible, there is comfort in technology that's a lot more basic and less predatory. While it is almost all fueled by nostalgia, it doesn't make it any less enjoyable to look at and use.

IN MEMORY OF MY OLD TOYS

WRITTEN BY: NIKHITA KUMAR

When I was in fifth grade, I was seized by the all-too-common—yet incredibly misguided—desire to "grow up," whatever that really means. As a child, my notion of "growing up" consisted of three simple things—
1) Being able to eat whatever I wanted; 2) To have loads of money; and 3)To let go of all childish things I possessed. That included all of my old toys. So I, in reckless bravado, took most of my old dolls—the ones I had spent playing with and tenderly caring for only hours before—and tossed them into a dusty donation box, never to be seen again.

It's a short story of regret. I felt their absence months after getting rid of them. And though I told myself it was for the better, my old toys continued to occupy a small, sizable portion of my mind.

In my mind I house a junk drawer of memories for my toys. Many are so old it's shocking that I can even recall their existence. Yet I recall and cherish the memories I created with my toys. From fantastical adventures going on quests to find random trinkets I scrounged from my mother's jewelry box, to battling the worn plastic dragon I had stolen from my younger brother's shelf, there are too many stories to tell.

I once had a Barbie doll so cheap that it was made up of plastic body parts that connected together. Without fail, her arm would always pop off when I played with her. So I dubbed her my heroic one-armed Barbie, maimed in battle against the fearsome dragon.

The battles she shared with my brother's toy dragon were legendary. In the end, I put her away in the donation box, never to be seen by me again. I hope that somewhere (if she wasn't thrown away for good), my Barbie is somewhere out there entertaining a child with her perpetually dislocating arm.

I had a pink stuffed bear that was with me from when I was born—and for the longest time, it had never left my side. I kept her at my bedside for years, cuddling her every night to fall asleep: my favorite toy. Even as her once-bright pink fur grew dull and one of her eyes tore off, she remained my favorite stuffed animal. I imagined her as a kind of knight in shining armor, protecting my other stuffed animals from the various monsters that would awaken at night. In the mass banishment of my toys to the donation box, she was one of the most unfortunate sacrifices. I admitted this to no one, but for over a month after I gave her away, I struggled with falling asleep.

I also had an adorable little Indian Kelly that I played with often when conjuring up fantastical stories for my dolls. She was special in that she was the only little girl doll I possessed. I would make her the main character of so many of my stories. I whipped up tales of this little girl going off on quests to find treasure, exploring new worlds, and making friends with my various other toys. There are so many more tales about the different toys I possessed that I could tell, but doing so would take so, so long. My memories of these toys are vast in number, but I hope they will stay with me for a long time.

Remembering these things—little aspects of my childhood long since irrelevant to my present—might seem pointless to some, but to me these memories are representations of a life I once lived, and the special kind of love and heart I once gave to these simple objects.

I had once viewed my stories as shameful and childish—things that needed to be boxed away for me to grow up. I know now that they were truly special. If I could go back in time, I would tell my younger self not to throw all of those toys away; that as an adult, she would look back on her stories not as frivolous games but as reflections of the fresh, active imagination of a creative young child. Though I tried to stifle it back then, I still possess this imagination now—I just need to remind myself to find it.

by

KARIS KIM

GLOBETROTTING

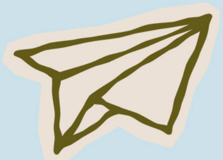
From Spain, I remember the texture of uneven stone cobblestones beneath my feet just as vividly as witnessing the jaw-dropping intricacy of the Sagrada Familia. Seoul is the subway, the cute cafes, triangle kimbap, and the dizzying exhilaration of dancing in the club with my friends. I can hear the noisy babble of hundreds of tourists packed into a Japanese temple just as clearly as I can hear waves quietly crash against the shore.

I don't see travelling as simply a checklist of tourist destinations and photo ops; it's a privilege, encapsulated by famous buildings and hole-in-the-wall restaurants and shared laughter as you breathlessly stumble back to your hotel. My junk drawer won't be filled with expensive plane tickets or heaps of my newly-purchased clothes—it'll be little trinkets, souvenirs, snapshots of my memories from all over the world.

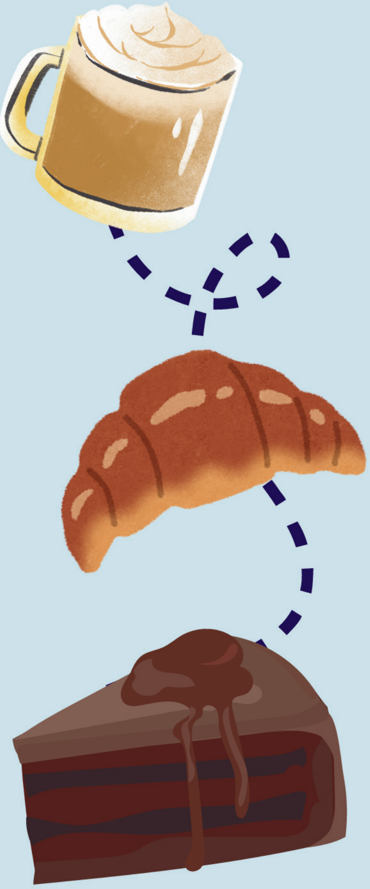
read.
know.
grow.

Wish you were here!
Greetings!
CITY MAP
2
CENTAVOS
DENIM CO.
PREMIUM QUALITY

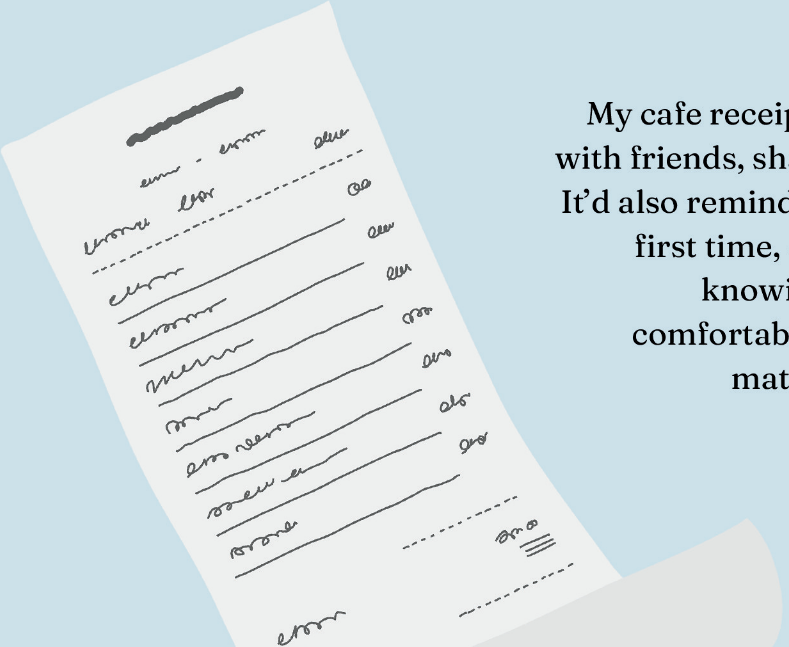
KOREA: CAFE RECEIPT



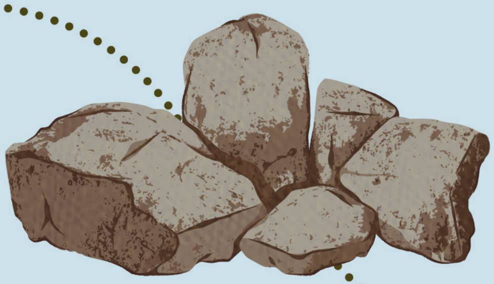
Korea has a huge themed cafe culture. All of Asia does, but Korea in particular ensures that you don't leave the country without having experienced an impromptu latte photoshoot. Over the course of a month this past summer, I went to dozens with my friends and family, and even solo, to the point where it became a near- daily occurrence.



After my study abroad class, some of my favorite memories include conspiring with my classmates to visit a viral cafe and explore a new town. On Monday, I'd take a twenty-minute train to a cafe facing a two-story waterfall and listen to the white noise of the water as I nibbled on my bread. Wednesday found me at an underwater-themed cafe with my cousin; we took photos of each other with her digital camera, our faces illuminated by the deep blue ambient lighting and the silver reflections of the shiny, hanging jellyfish. My friend and I visited an Internet-famous cafe on Friday, made within a former metal factory and heavily based on this grunge aesthetic. We tried chocolate cake and croissants topped with grapes and sugar powder, and yuzu tea (but we posted it on our Insta stories first, of course).



My cafe receipt wouldn't just remind me of the hours I've spent with friends, sharing desserts and sipping on each other's drinks. It'd also remind me of how I nervously ordered in Korean for the first time, conscious of my American accent and fearing not knowing a phrase. It's a memory of how I became more comfortable in my culture and language, all encapsulated in matcha frappes, delicious bread, and digital cameras.

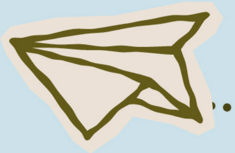


SPAIN: POCKET-SIZED STONE

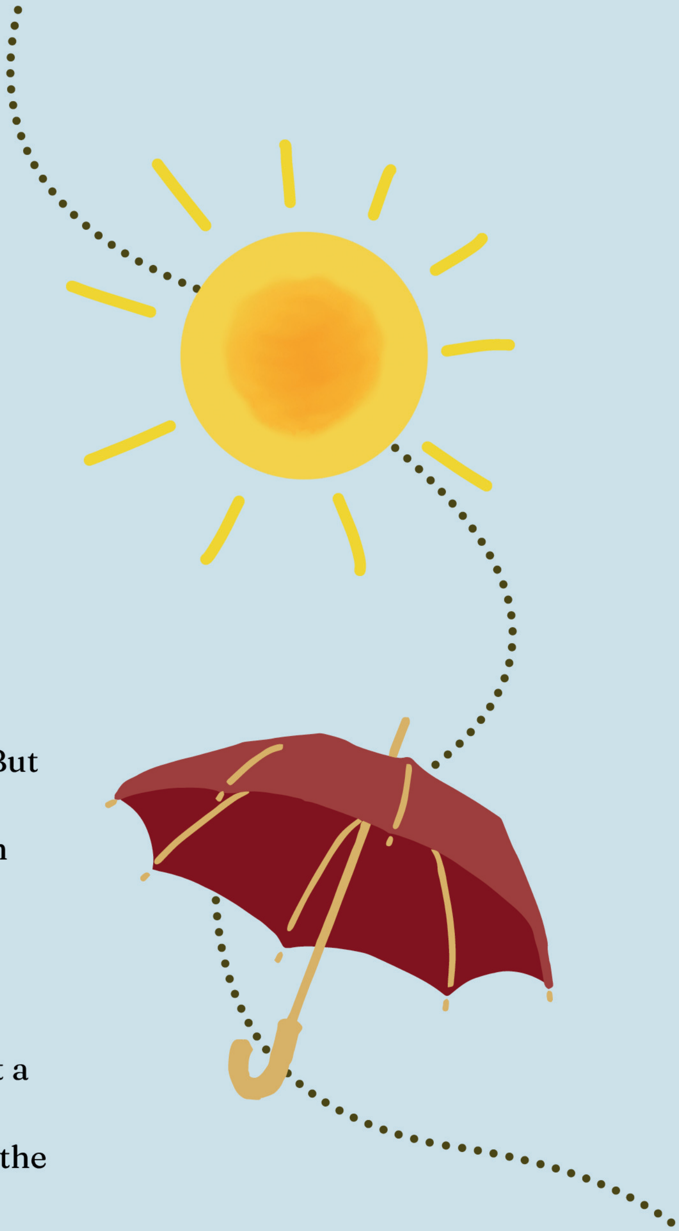
As funny as it'd be to pick up a random rock in Spain and call it my treasured memory, I have a specific stone in mind. It'd be from the stone wall at Mirador de San Nicolás, a famous viewpoint in Granada that offers an iconic view of the Alhambra and Sierra Nevada mountains. The hour or two we spent in that little spot encompassed some of my favorite memories from my vacation, not for the excitement or visiting a famous tourist spot, but for the quiet appreciation I felt with my dad.

After I graduated high school, my dad and I went to Spain together; it was our first trip together, just the two of us. Since it was a gift to me, I planned where I wanted to go, but my dad (who'd gone to Spain before) gave me suggestions on where to visit and spots to see. This viewpoint was one of these spots, and we watched the sun set on the Alhambra, bathing the valley in brilliant oranges and yellows. Near us were street performers singing with their guitars, and my dad and I sat quietly together listening to their music, sitting on a stone wall watching the day end.

I'd bring back a pocket-sized stone from this wall, reminding me of sunset, legs dangling over the ledge, of music and quiet chatter and my dad's steady presence by my side.



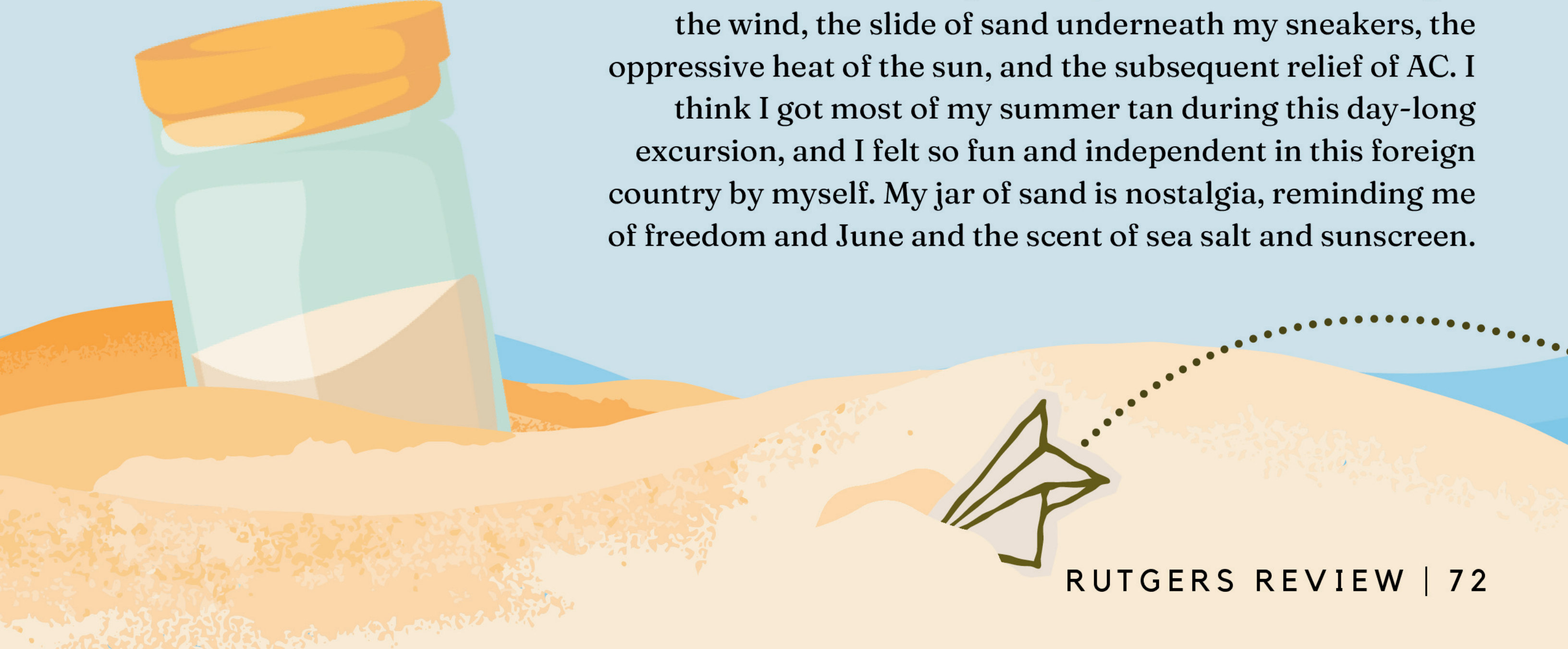
JAPAN:
JAR OF SAND



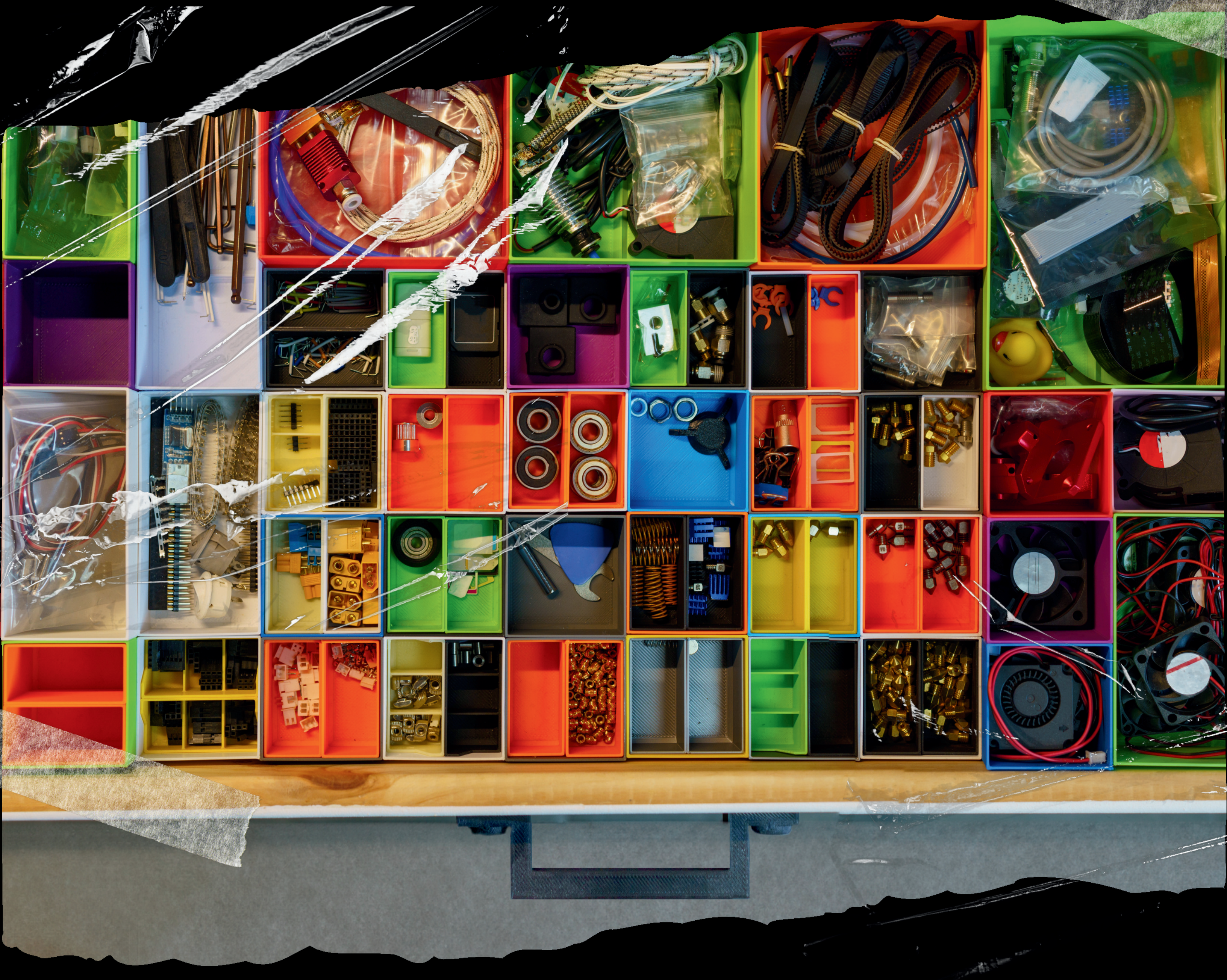
I don't think sand is what people first think of when they hear Japan: I'd imagine they'd think of Tokyo bustling at night or serene temples in Kyoto surrounded by forests. But Japan reminds me of the summer, of heat and sun and humidity, and of my day trip to Kamakura, a seaside town that was one of my favorite places of my whole nine-day stay.

I went to Japan with a travel buddy, which I was glad for since this was my first "solo" trip without my parents. But a few days in, we decided to venture off on our own: he wanted to visit temples and shrines, and I wanted to tour the area and take in the scenery. So I took an hour-long train from Tokyo to Kamakura and circled around with an umbrella for shade, eating savory curry at a train station restaurant, and enjoying the breeze near the sea.

It was summer in a snapshot: my white blouse billowing in the wind, the slide of sand underneath my sneakers, the oppressive heat of the sun, and the subsequent relief of AC. I think I got most of my summer tan during this day-long excursion, and I felt so fun and independent in this foreign country by myself. My jar of sand is nostalgia, reminding me of freedom and June and the scent of sea salt and sunscreen.



Are you throwing away too much?



By Charles Beaumont

I'm sure you've been told to throw away all the "junk" you have at some point or another. Whether it's your parents complaining about your messy room or a roommate of yours wondering if you lied about being "organized" on your application, a lot of people believe that anything without a specific purpose that also takes up space is "junk." While yes, it certainly can be considered "useless junk," not everything that falls under that category can be considered so useless that you can't keep it. For instance, many of these items can hold important memories that you may have otherwise forgotten. Furthermore, the process of collecting trinkets can not only be fun but can also lead to friendship and overall strengthen your community. Here are the items in my "junk drawer" and the memories associated with them.

I made this pin with my new friend that I met during the first few weeks of college. She was sewing a dress in the Livingston Makerspace and invited me to come along. I didn't have anything specific to do there, but I liked the prospect of hanging out with a friend and going on a sidequest. During that time, we ended up discovering a pin machine, and decided to put it to use.

Ironically enough, this pin was made on October 3rd, and not the 2nd as the date implies. At the same time, my friend was explaining a story she was working on and was joking about how a significant date in that story, October 2nd, should be celebrated as a holiday. I guess wearing pins with that date is a good start. Although we made these pins as a joke, I think it has a more serious symbolic meaning. It represents how friendship and community is something you have to fight for. Not necessarily in the traditional sense, but in the sense that you have to actively put yourself out there in order to develop relationships with others. Happy belated 10/2.

I like collecting tickets from different attractions I go to, ranging anywhere from museums to parks to theatrical performances. I cherish them and the memories attached to them all the same, but there's a particular ticket I'm especially fond of, that being my Dial M for Murder ticket. My friend and I went to see this play and had a great time. However, we couldn't JUST go there. I, of course, had to tell my parents that I was "studying" at my "local library" so they'd let me go, so our trip to see the play turned into a bit of a mission since I had to sneak out while looking like I was going to the library. This whole experience felt like it was straight out of a coming of age movie, especially since this was the first time me and my friend went a decent distance away from town on our own, all in her newly acquired car.

Arcade cards. I got the Supercharged Entertainment card at my friend's surprise birthday that me and another friend of ours planned. Apparently, us going to "fill our water bottles" at the same time wasn't very slick. Our friend definitely knew something was up, so we decided to "kidnap" her to maintain some element of surprise ("kidnap" and "surprise" are used very loosely seeing as we previously discussed what time would work best for her and she agreed to be blindfolded during the drive to the arcade.) Walking her into the building was quite funny, since we had to lead her in. We probably looked a little insane since the people around us were laughing. We were, of course, laughing along with them. We ended up having a lot of fun there.

My beloved art prints. All the ones in my collection at the moment were designed by Ana Inciardi. I would highly recommend checking her work out, both online and in person. You can find her prints in print vending machines all around the country. As of right now, the closest machines to the Rutgers New Brunswick campus are in Princeton, Short Hills, and Newark. The bagel and water tower prints are especially important to me, since they were the first prints I got. I got them at the MoMA gift shop when I went there for my birthday with my friends. Funnily enough, all 3 of us ended up getting matching bagel prints. My other favorite prints have to be the limited edition Grand Central Station prints. They remind me of Catcher in the Rye, which was one of my favorite books and made a huge impact on me during middle school and high school. I was on the hunt for these prints for months. I was lucky that Inciardi released a limited amount of them on her website a few months after the initial collaboration. I was on a flight during the drop, so I asked my friend if they could get me a pack since they had internet access while I didn't. I am eternally grateful for this. I ended up getting 4 GCT cards, but I got 2 sets of duplicates.

MINI PRINT
VENDING MACHINE
4 QUARTERS = 1 SURPRISE PRINT
ANASTASIA INCIARDI PRINTS

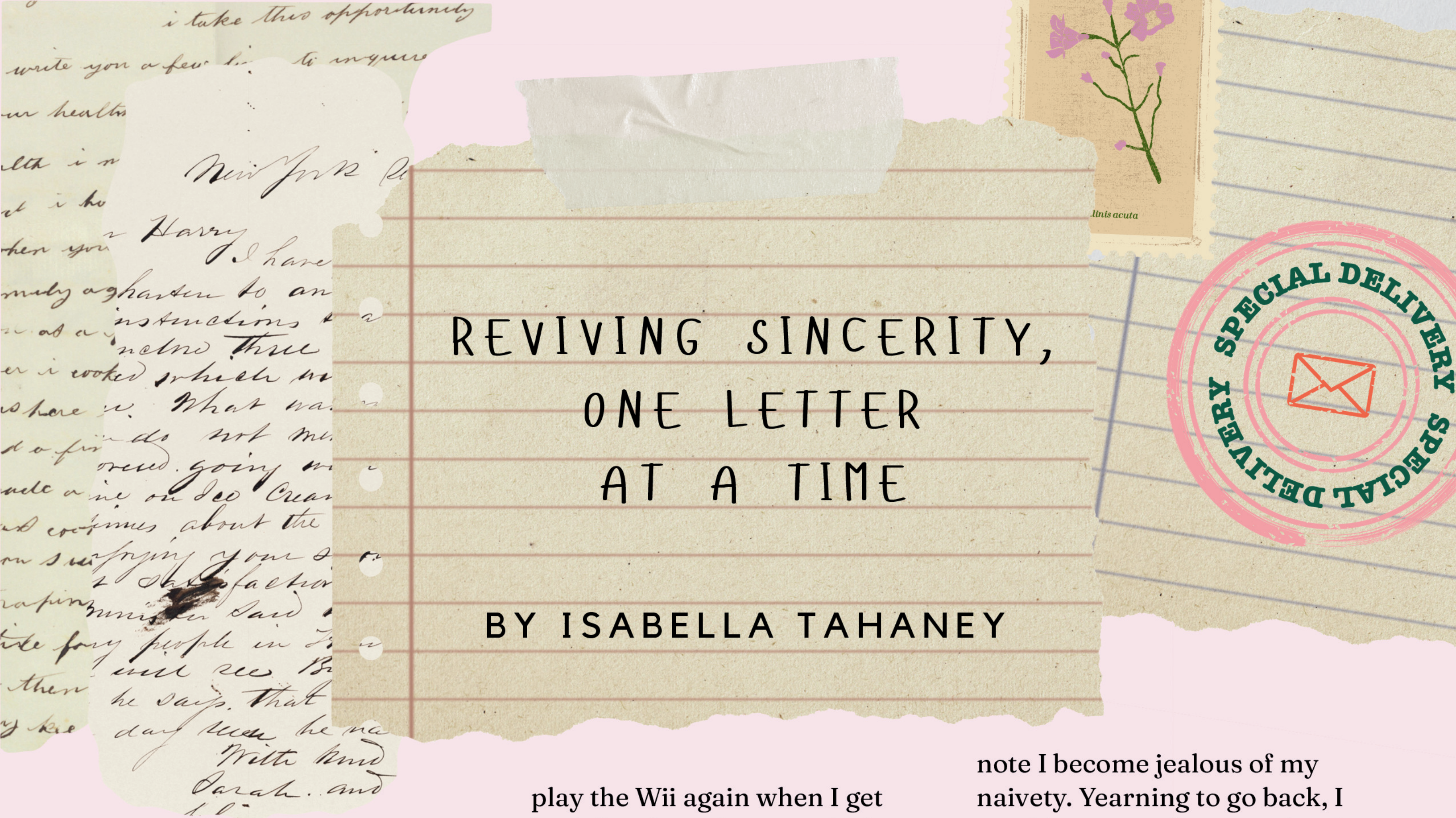
Inciardi's Art Print Vending Machines

This led me to discovering the mini art print trading community on Reddit, which allowed me to trade my duplicates for the cards I wanted.

If you've ever seen a playbill, you may have asked yourself the following question: "who the hell actually looks through this thing?" The answer is me. I used to be in that same boat a while ago, but then I realized that playbills can often have very interesting things. Actor bios are standard for every playbill, but some may even have interviews with cast members or sketches of different costumes. There's a surprising amount of things to learn and even take inspiration from in playbills.

Are all of these items really "useless junk"? Maybe they are, but they also remind me of fun experiences I've had, and the side quests I went on to acquire which have allowed me to either deepen my friendship with others or learn more about my community. Sure I remember all these things as they are, but maybe I wouldn't have without these items. Maybe I wouldn't remember the excitement I felt as I was handed tickets to a play I've been wanting to see for months while I was supposed to be "studying" for anatomy.

Maybe I wouldn't remember leaving the arcade with my friends so late that all the food places had long since closed, so our feast that night consisted of Airheads and Hershey chocolates that we spent game tickets on. Sure I remember those things, but would I look back on those memories as much and as fondly as I do had I trashed the junk associated with them? Would you? The next time you go to an event and find a memento, maybe you can keep it. Perhaps it's not the best to do this with every trinket you see. But it's not so bad to have a little collection, either.



REVIVING SINCERITY, ONE LETTER AT A TIME

BY ISABELLA TAHANEY

While going through my own personal junk drawer, on a lazy summer afternoon when I was supposed to be cleaning my room, I came across an old postcard with an inscription on the back. It was written by my best friend from grade school, dated April 2012. The borders of the page had softened with time, but the fantastical castle surrounded by an icy landscape, like something out of a movie, was still clear. I haven't spoken to her properly since middle school, but there on the back was her message to me, fully preserved, from all those years ago. In perfect first grader dialect, she had written, "This castle reminded me of Hogwarts, and I miss you so much, but I got chocolate for you in Switzerland that is the best in the world. I hope we can play the Wii again when I get back," and much more of what we considered to be very serious matters. Something about how her handwriting looked exactly like I remembered it, frozen in the stillness of ink like a time capsule, kept me from tossing the postcard with the other old papers. Throwing it away would feel like destroying something precious, even though the past that the postcard represented was already gone. Hooked by its nostalgic draw, I read on.

The page in my hand seemed to take me back to the softness of my classroom's carpet in first grade, the smell of crayons in the air as I earnestly discussed with my best friend whatever nerdy book we were reading. Ironically I had wanted to be older at the time, thinking that maturity and responsibility would be more fun. Reading the note I become jealous of my naivety. Yearning to go back, I would give anything just for the chance to sit on that rug again and talk about the simple joys described in the postcard. I also realized that only a written note could create this intense feeling of nostalgia. Paper holds memories, between the old handwriting, the aging ink, and its authentic contents. It also provides a look into the author's mind in that moment, as handwritten notes tend to be honest and well thought out. When looking at pictures of my younger self, that little girl looking back at me looks unfamiliar, as if she is just another kid. It is only by getting into her mind, reading the daily thoughts and experiences from my old diaries and journals, that I remember who I was and what my life used to feel like. After reliving the first grade through the postcard, I became curious as to what other

memories were locked away, waiting to be uncovered.

Disappointingly nothing else conjured up the same sensation. While I uncovered a lot of junk, there were no other postcards or letters. In fact, I found nothing else handwritten from someone else, besides the occasional birthday card. Letters had simply gone out of style; that postcard was an outlier.

Having just experienced its emotional power, I wondered, why had we stopped?

Obviously, technology has made a lot of handwritten things redundant. Letters are inconvenient, bulky things that take days to arrive at their intended destination. They could easily be lost or damaged along the way, making them unreliable. Theoretically, anything said in a letter could be made into an email or text. The best part is, our phones are on us constantly. Whatever message that we have can be typed up at any time, and sent over instantly. Considering all that, a letter is a waste of time and paper in comparison. So why had my best friend bothered to write the postcard?

Though separated by the Atlantic, my friend could have easily messaged me on a flip phone or given me a call; she deliberately chose a postcard. I will never know her reasons, but I like to imagine that she had been captivated by the image of the castle and thought I would like it too. Also, there might have been something appealingly magical about being able to send a physical object so far, touched by her and I despite our distance. After she had returned, she told me that she spent a lot of time preparing what she would say. The ocean between us would have given her words more weight, as if we were exchanging important information that not even our phones were allowed to see.

Yes, she could have easily texted me, but I do not think it would have had the same effect. I tried to imagine it the "easier" way. My mom would have told me that she had texted me after school. She would hand me her flip phone, into which I would stare at pictures of my best friend and her family. The images would have given me a better idea of exactly where she was, and what she was doing. She would not have given the text as much thought, since there is less pressure to make a text perfect. Anything forgotten could be texted later, since phones create the illusion that we will always have access to communication with the other. So the message would be shorter and less concise, allowing the pictures to do the work. Nothing would be left to the imagination. When I first received the real letter, my imagination took off. I pictured my friend living in the highest towers of that castle, vacationing with princesses and dragons like the ones we read about. I created an entire story about her trip, which we discussed at length later. Leaving that element of mystery had made me think of her more, and we spent hours catching up when she returned. I doubt a text message would have inspired me with as much wonder as the postcard did. Also, I would probably never see the text message again after handing my mom's phone back. There would be no unearthing of physical proof of our friendship years later, and no chance to relive those blissfully innocent moments from the first grade.

With the postcard, everytime that I clean my room I think of the girl who used to be my best friend and wonder where she is now. Without my junk drawer souvenirs, those memories would fade.

These differences may seem insignificant, but they have drastically altered the way we communicate and form relationships today. Providing personal details in an online message feels rushed and inappropriate. A letter, on the other hand, is the perfect place for self-expression as it is intimate and long-lasting. Letters can be rewritten and reconsidered before they are sent, whereas the readily available instant send function of phones encourages impulsive messages. What's more, the effort that my best friend had put into thinking through what she wanted to say demonstrated a genuine care for my understanding. It could even be said that the postcard strengthened our relationship, as it showed that I was worth the effort of a letter and that she had not forgotten about me over vacation.

The primary argument for online communication is that it brings people closer, allowing connections that may not have been possible otherwise.

While I think it is beneficial for those who live far apart or are separated by working schedules, I believe that they are the exception. For everyone else, instant communication has made us vulnerable, impulsive, self-destructive, and neglectful.

To be constantly available to receive messages, there is also a pressure to respond at all times. Everyone has felt the guilt of not answering a text right when you see it, especially if the other person is aware that you are not busy. That online peer pressure forces us to think of a response quickly, sacrificing layers of depth that may have come with further reflection. While wonderfully efficient, that instant response is not always genuine. Depending on how the sender's day is going, or what kind of mood they are in, it might not reflect the truth of the matter at all. With online communication, words have become easier to send, but they are still just as difficult to take back

The rareness of the other person's company is also reduced, making us less appreciative of them when they are actually with us. There is less pressure on the goodbye, leaving more left unsaid. Also, since we are constantly armed with devices, messages from others can distract us from quality time with one person. Not only that, but many of the "interactions" we think we are getting online are misleading. Messages can now be written by AI, with certain communication platforms like Gmail encouraging AI-generated responses automatically. Images are altered, and artworks are fabricated. In other words, it has become easier to lie- the mediums through which we communicate are encouraging us to.

So what, then, becomes the case for the slow, burdening letter? Perhaps it is good to give ourselves more time to think our messages through, instead of throwing light, meaningless comments into the void of online messaging. With fewer chances to communicate, the sender might feel compelled to write something more meaningful. The way we communicate reveals a lot about how much we value the time and company of the other person. In a world flooded with fabricated messages, it is time to prioritize those meaningful relationships. A letter is the perfect way to make someone feel valued, and to create a space of emotional openness. So, next time you have something to share with a friend, consider writing it to them. Who knows, maybe they will unearth your letter from their own personal junk drawer one day, and think of you.

FOR THE LOVE OF BAKING...

By Addison Dicang

COOKING
OIL

Baking. A hobby that I've found myself spending lots of my free time doing recently. I find peace in baking, whether it be as a stress reliever or simply a time waster. But most importantly, I've found that it's a way to express my love to the people most important in my life. This activity is the culmination of my time, effort, and passion, all wrapped up together in the form of a sweet treat. It's a means of self-expression and creativity that I enjoy sharing with others. But most importantly, it's something that I know I can pass down for a lifetime.

I try to bake whenever I am free, testing various ingredients, techniques, and overall being able to explore the endless creative possibilities that it has to offer. I often find myself jotting down specific pointers in my notes app or on Post-it Notes. Brown the butter. Don't over-mix. Bake for twelve minutes. Cool for five minutes. Simple notes that make a huge difference. It is not just me speaking to myself, but me speaking to my future generations through notes that they will one day, hopefully, use.

There is one memory that always sticks with me when baking. It was the time my brother and I first attempted to bake cookies from scratch. I had found the recipe on TikTok and wanted to try it out as I had never made cookies from scratch before. We gathered the ingredients on the table, excited to make homemade cookies, and proudly called ourselves bakers. Flour, sugar, baking powder, eggs, vanilla extract, and salt. The typical ingredients for baking cookies. We followed the recipe as it was written. Mix the dry ingredients together, then add the wet ingredients. Add chocolate chips. Line the baking sheet. After putting the cookies in the oven to bake, we eagerly sat in the living room to wait. The timer then sounded, causing the two of us to run into the kitchen to take the cookies out of the oven. It was when we opened the oven that we realized something had gone wrong. The cookies were not cookies, but mini cakes. They rose in height but did not spread. The perfect golden brown color that the recipe had specified was not present, as they appeared pale and cracked. Despite this setback, we took them out and let them sit on the sheet to cool down. We hoped that the look of the cookies was the only thing that we messed up. Oh, how we were wrong.

After they had cooled, we broke apart one cookie to share. As we both took a bite, we looked at each other, realizing that we both got the same taste. Lemon. We had used lemon extract instead of vanilla by accident. As for the cake-like appearance and texture of the cookies, we used cake flour instead of all-purpose flour. Although we messed up these cookies a hundred percent, I have a memory that I will never forget. The conversations we had while mixing the ingredients. The teamwork we never knew we had. The laughs we shared after we ate the butchered cookies. It is something that will always stick with me for the rest of my life.

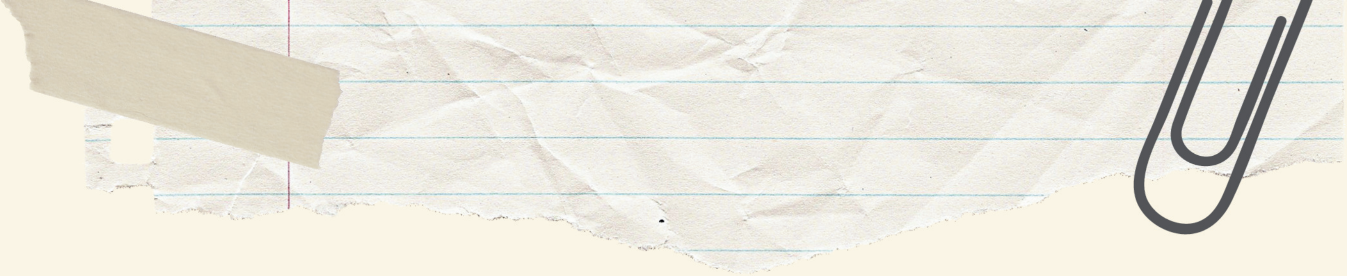
Baking has never been a popular activity within my household. We never had special family recipes or homemade desserts that other families might have. Our family recipes were the instructions on the back of a Betty Crocker box. But when baking with family, it was never about the secret ingredients or tips for making the best desserts. Instead, it was about the time spent and memories formed through the process.

I Have a New Personality Every Week

By Athena Caruso

Last month, I swore I was going to become a DJ. I would open up TikTok and without a doubt, ninety-nine percent of my scrolls would consist of people showing off their DJ mixes in their bedrooms, teaching techniques, or playing a set at some eccentric venue. I liked every DJ video I saw, interacted with comments, researched and downloaded special platforms, and made it my mission to learn how to DJ for a whole week. The week after that, I decided to become a pilates guru.

Having hyperfixations, or brief obsessions with a specific interest, is more common than you may think. If you can see your different past interest phases in just one swipe through your camera roll, then you have probably already been affected. The term "hyperfixation" was initially associated with ADHD and Autism, used to describe the intense focus on specific topics of interest, which is a concept that is linked with the two disorders. However, the term is being used now more than ever because of the increasing number of people, specifically those in Gen Z, experiencing these short bursts of passion for new interests. And the usual culprit, social media, is to blame.



Platforms like TikTok use special algorithms to direct viewers to content, displaying a specific niche or interest. By doing this, these social media platforms can completely immerse you into whatever interest you're being fed, before completely switching up the content and re-encapsulating you the following week. The system that all of your favorite video-oriented apps use is the reason why they are thriving more than ever, and is the reason why many people are finding themselves with these constant hyperfixations.

However, these hyperfixations aren't necessarily bad. Behind the urge to learn about a new interest is a sense of comfort. A community is formed between you and the millions of other people who share the same interest through commenting on videos and posting about the topic. It's easy to find relatability and a sense of belonging when faced with these things, especially because many people crave a sense of identity in an ever-changing world. Being able to contribute your energy to a specific interest, even for a brief amount of time, is grounding in the way that it can give you the impression of a direction in your unclear future. All of that being said, it is still important to ensure you don't lose yourself in the intense immersion of a new hyperfixation.

Like a junk drawer, our brains are overflowing with pieces from our past passions, interests, and hyperfixations. Whether it's a piece of knowledge or good memories, there is always something left behind. So, enjoy that current new hobby or fandom, you never know when the next one is going to come and sweep you off your feet.

POTPOURRI

PHOTO BY MARIE TOOMEY

my heart is made of jello

by Alina Arshad

My heart is made of Jello
And as fragile as it too
So tempting to crush-
Not worth a fragile touch
As common as can be,
Hundreds on this shelf just like me.

Go on, get yourself a treat
I can show you a taste of something sweet
When you're done, I'll beg and plead
But keeping me? That's no request to heed
"You're disposable" you'll say
You're meant to be thrown away.

My bones are made of porcelain
They're delicate and dainty too,
So smooth and white
They shine beautifully bright
How easily broken they are
So tempting to crack and mar

Please don't you turn me to shards
I collapse like a house of cards
So I'll gather dust on your shelf
Waiting for the chance to prove myself
To be worthy of your heart
Because yours is the real kind

Dancing *hand in hand*

Hand in hand,
dancing under the living room light
You knew where to go, I never thought to look down
Anchored in your arms, the world spinning around.

Hand in hand,
school bag on, chasing the morning bell
You waved as I ran, chasing stories to tell
Never looking back—
Knowing you'll always be the light in the dark.

Hand in hand,
Flying over oceans
The map was unknown, but I wasn't alone
Your voice was the lighthouse calling me home.

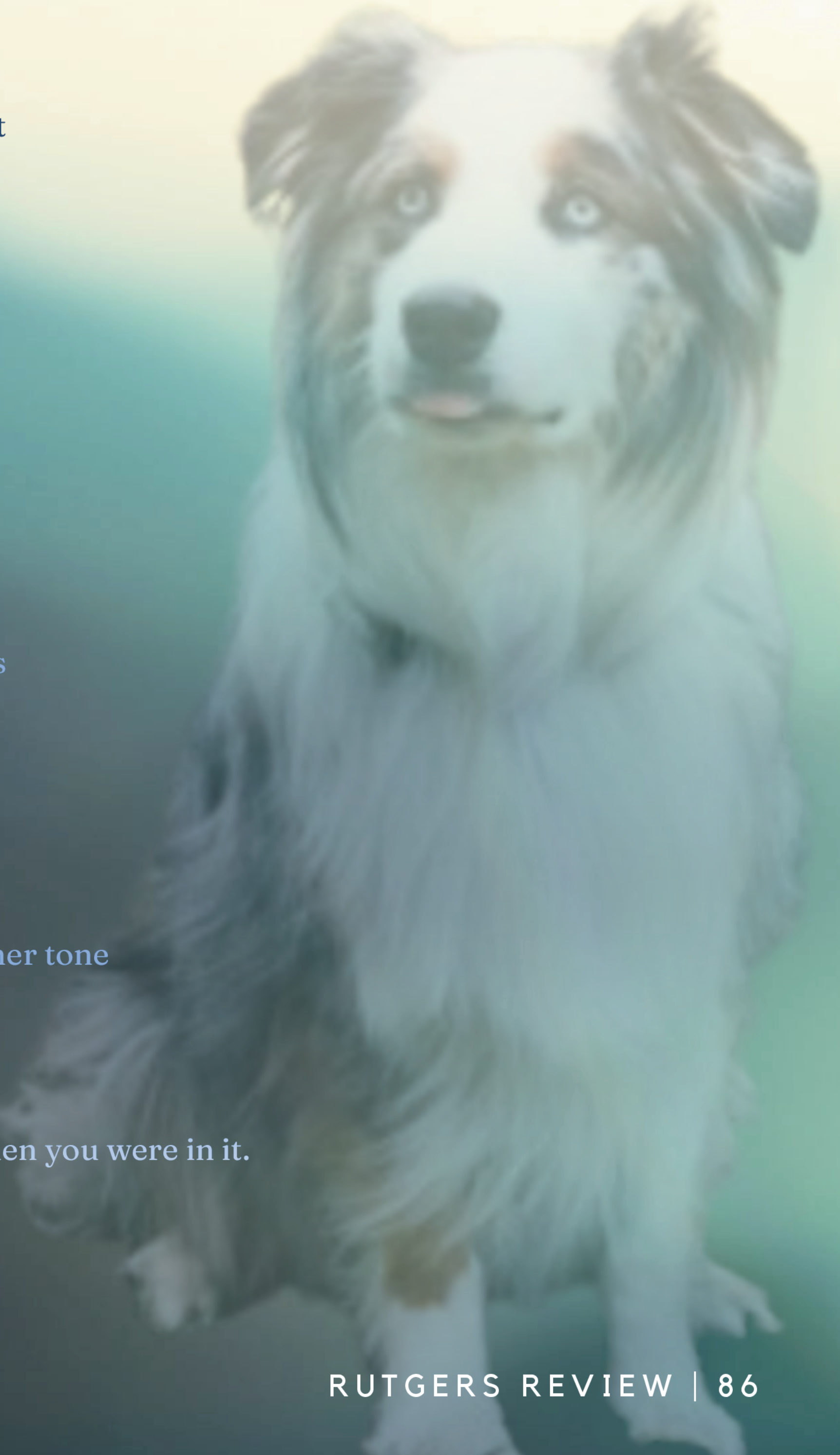
Hand in hand,
driving through roads we didn't know by name
You kept me calm while my world changed its frame
Still hand in hand, though not quite the same.

I know the steps now, but you still
play the song
dancing with me, all the way along.

~ Hermeline Berteloot

I'll Never Let Go /
You'll Always Be a Part of Me

by Hermeline Berteloot



Weeks have passed
tears have dried
waiting for life to feel whole again
until realization hit—

that as I stand before dirt and dust
I can't recall...
the exact blue of his eyes,
or the exact feel of his fur

they have faded
like the sound of his bark
in the backyard
that now holds a hollow spark

Yet his warmth lingers...
in the shadows of my darkest days
when the echoes only I can hear
are deafening.

More so than the silence
that fills our home
which will never return to its former tone

Because,
while you'll always be part of me
life never shined so brightly as when you were in it.

Lost & Filed

~ Gianna Ramirez

everything i meant to say
is saved in prologues.
i find everywhere else to put everything—

3 accounts,
7 names,
12 addresses.

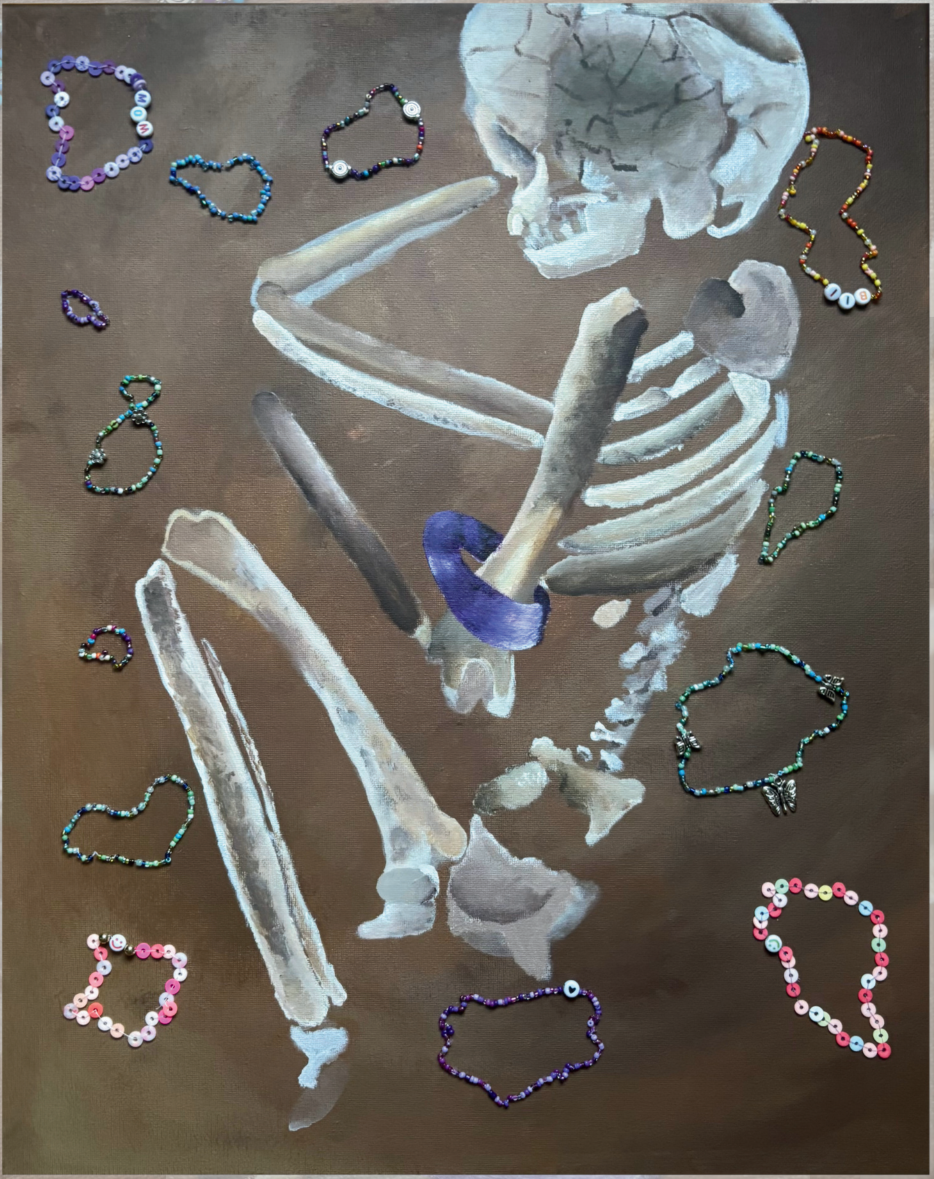
soon enough
i'll forget what it is that i am
and what i've done,
and a piece will be left in every corner—
so scattered
i won't need to find it anymore.

59
PEPPERMINT

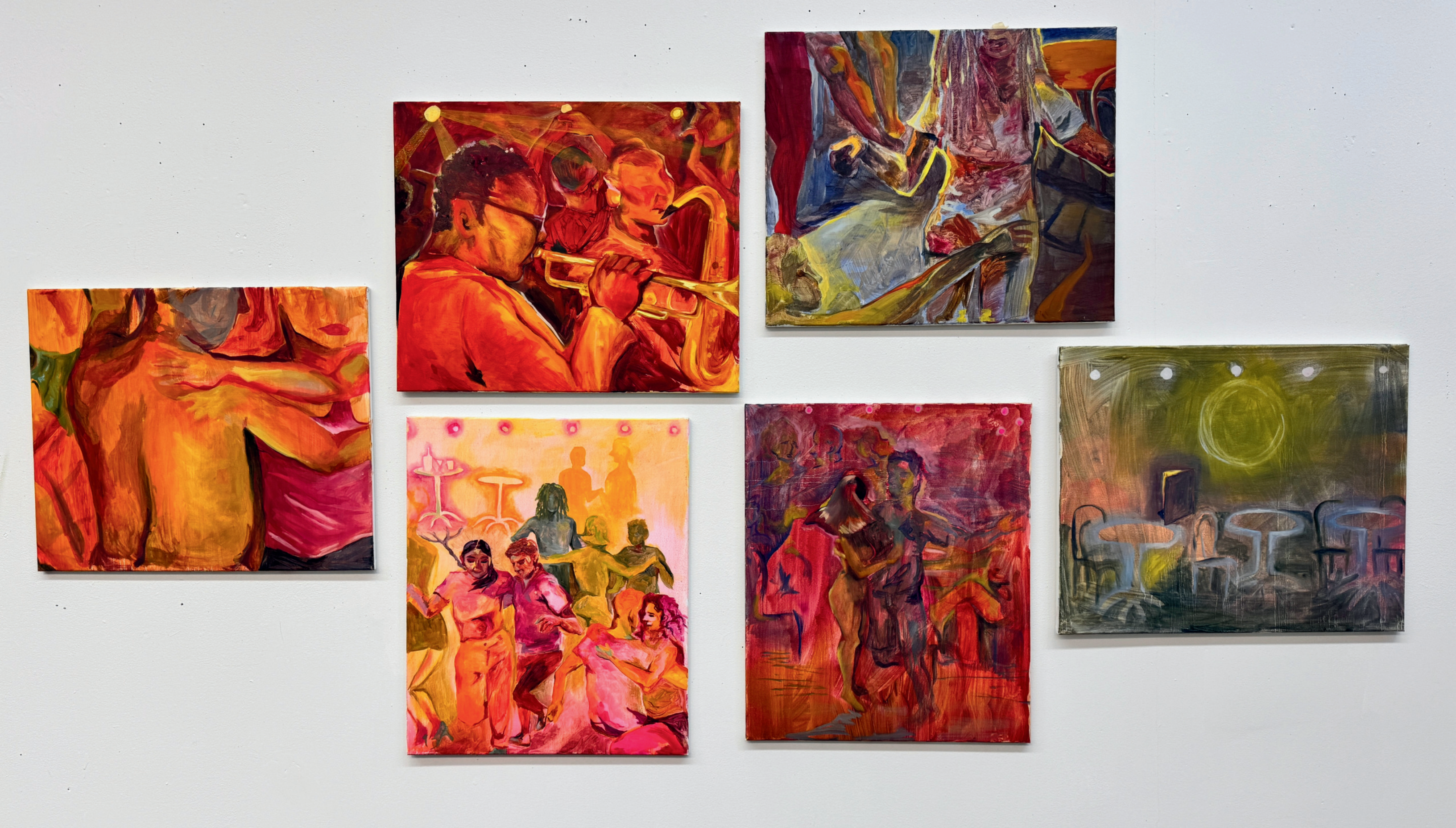
but eventually,
someone asks about that day.
a decade ago,
and when i spill over.
the record cabinets of my mind,
i cower in fear.

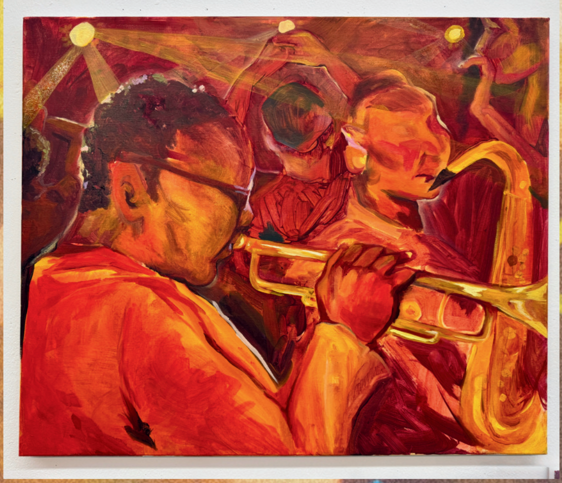
it's no early sign of dementia,
i tell them—
"i fear i've just lost my bearings.

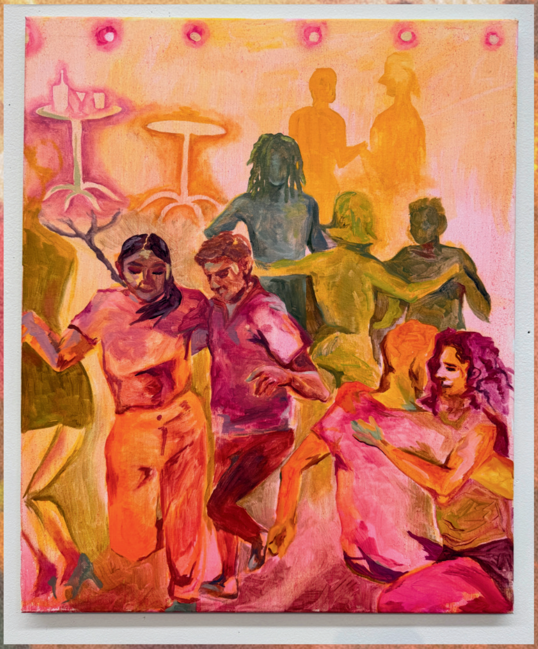
give me time to find it,
hopefully not with a deadline,
because that too.
will find a new place to sit."



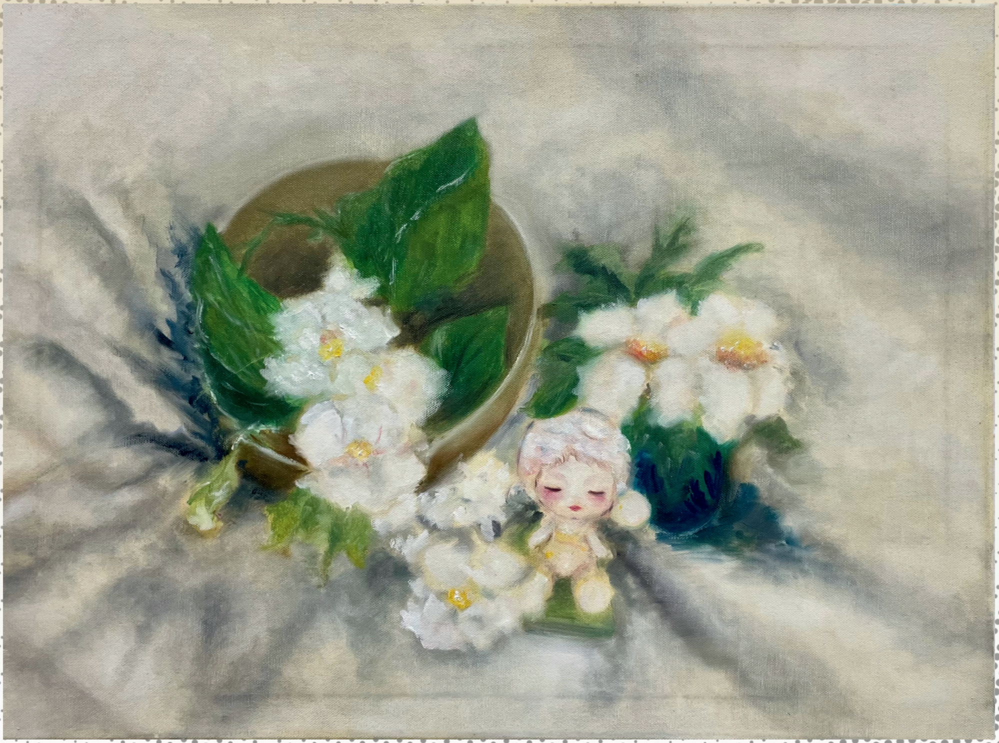
Honey, your joy is everything
by Lilian Barber





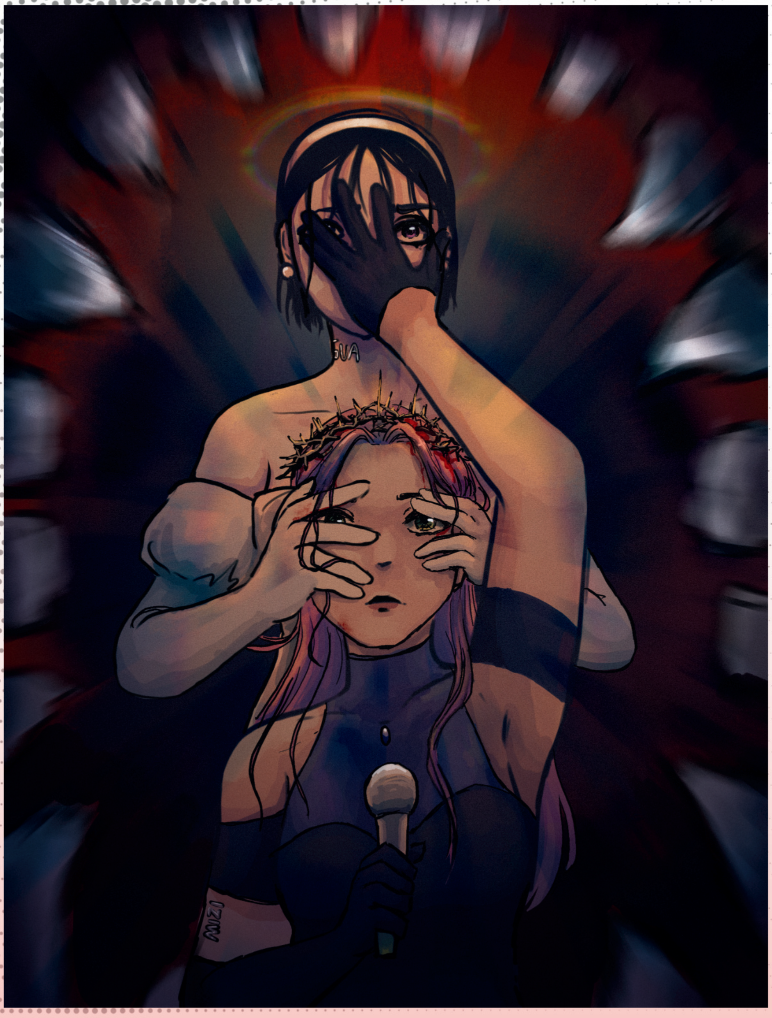


Artworks by
Mariana Sanchez



Artwork
by
Nicole
Lin

Artwork
by
Julia
Burgess



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